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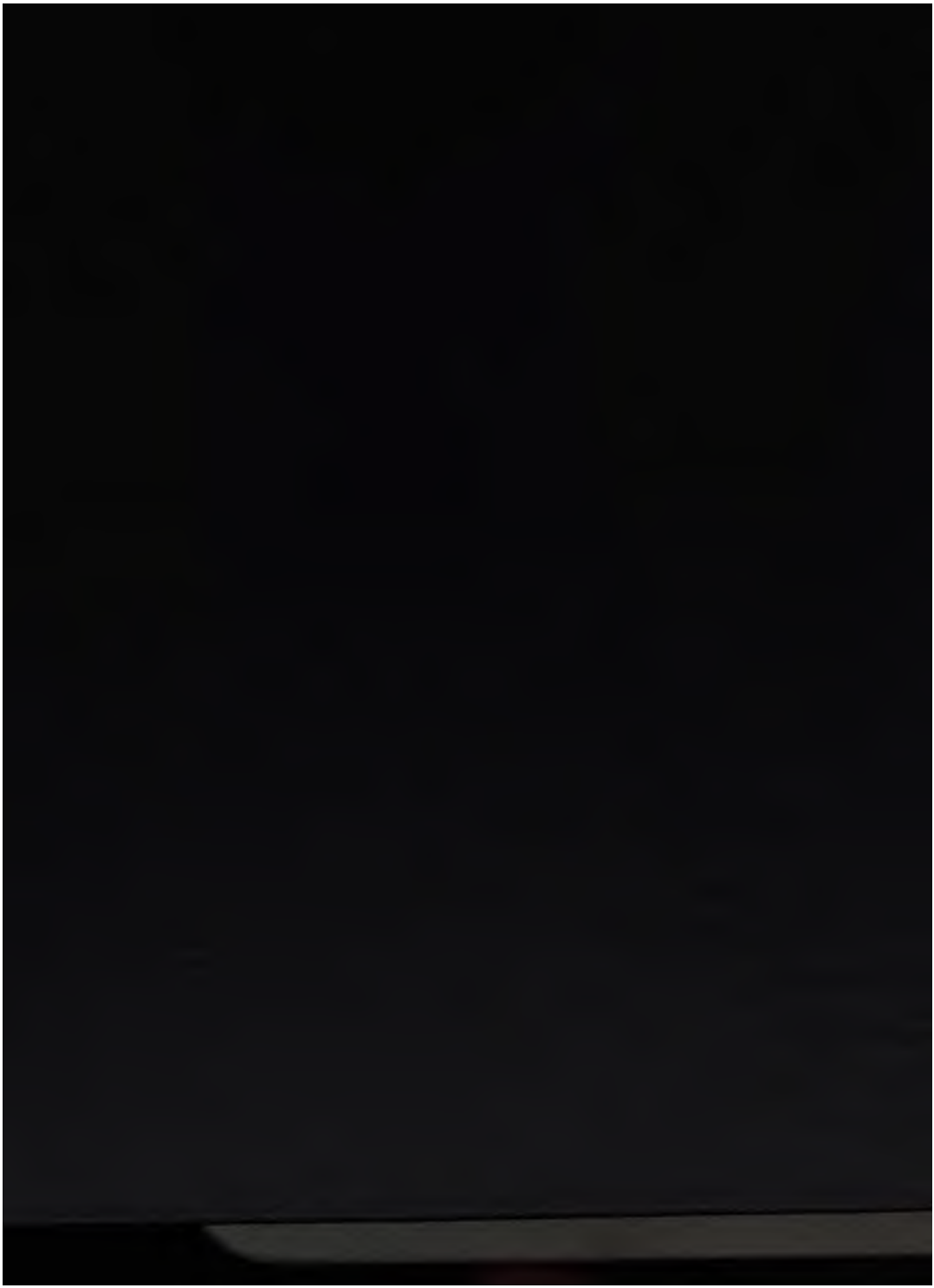

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WILD ROSES OF CAPE ANN,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

LUCY LARCOM.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
The Riverside Press, Cambridge.
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TO

My Public;

NOT CRITICS, BUT FRIENDS.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Wild Roses of Cape Ann	7
The Little Brown Cabin	11
My Mariner	12
At Georges	16
The Old Hymns	19
Rafe's Chasm	25
The Sea's Bondmaid	29
On the Misery	31
My Name-Aunt	38
A Strip of Blue	41
The Lady Arbella	44
Sweet-Brier	50
Mistress Hale of Beverly	52
Sylvia	63
Flower of Grass	68
Mehetabel	70
Fern-Life	75
Phebe	77
In the Air	81
Bessie and Ruth	82
Golden Daisies	85
Barberrying	87
A Gambrel Roof	90
Goody Grunsell's House	97

THE FOG-BELL 101
OLD MADELINE 102
THEY SAID 107
GOLDEN-ROD 108
AT HER BEDSIDE 111
OVER THE HILL 112
WORKMATES 114
THE WATER-LILY 118
MY MERRIMACK 119
THE FIELD-SPARROW 123
OCTOBER 124
WHEN THE WOODS TURN BROWN 127
NOVEMBER 128
A WHITE WORLD 131
SNOW-BLOOM 133
BETWEEN WINTER AND SPRING 134
FREIND BROOK 135
ONE BUTTERFLY 140
WHITE EVERLASTING FLOWERS 142
ON THE LEDGE 146
UP THE ANDROSCOGGIN 148
IN A CLOUD RIFT 151
MOUNTAINEER'S PRAYER 154
ASLEEP ON THE SUMMIT 156
SHARED 157
FROM THE HILLS 159
A PASSING SAIL 160
BERMOOTHES 162
THE SUNSET-BIRD OF DOMINICA 167
SEA AND SKY 171
HORIZON 172
R. W. E. 175
J. G. W. 176
O. W. H. 178

Growing Old 180
A Prairie Nest 182
A Whisper of Memory 185
Through Minnehaha's Veil 187
In Vision 191
Need and Wish 193
Thriftless 195
No Loss 197
What Cometh? 199
A Friend 201
My Fear 203
Come Home 206
Befriended 209
F. W. R. 212
Show me Thy Way 214
The Heart of God 215
Indwelling 221
Praying Always 223
Christ the Light 226
A Stray Leaf 228
Not Pure, but Purified 229
Myra 231
Ye did it unto Me 237
Woman's Easter 238
Why Life is Sweet 240
The True Witness 243
Daily Bread 245
My Cup runneth over 248
Our Christ 249
The Ladder of Angels 251
Winter Midnight 253
Sea-Side Hymn 255
Drawing Nearer 257
His Birthday 261

DOOR AND KEEPER 263
THY KINGDOM COME 265
IMMORTAL YEARS 266
FORETASTE 269
YET ONWARD 271

WILD ROSES OF CAPE ANN.

WILD roses of Cape Ann! A rose is sweet,
No matter where it grows; and roses grow,
Nursed by the pure heavens and the strengthening earth,
Wherever men will let them. Every waste
And solitary place is glad for them,
Since the old prophet sang so, until now.
But our wild roses, flavored with the sea,
And colored by the salt winds and much sun
To healthiest intensity of bloom, —
We think the world has none so beautiful.
Even from his serious height, the Puritan
[1] Stooped to their fragrance, and recorded them
"Sweet single roses," maidens of the woods,
The lovelier for their virgin singleness.
[1] And when good Winthrop with his white fleet came,

[1] Allusions to the early history of Cape Anne may be verified by referring to the Narrative of Captain John Smith, to the records of Hubbard, Higginson, Winthrop, and others, — and to the local histories of the shore-towns of Massachusetts, northeast of Salem.

Skirting the coast in June, they breathed on him,
Mingling their scent with balsams of the pine,
And strange wild odors of the wilderness:
Their sweetness penetrated the true heart
That waited in Old England, when he wrote
"My love, this is an earthly Paradise!"

No Paradise, indeed! the east wind's edge
Too keenly cuts, albeit no sword of flame!
Yet have romantic fancies bloomed around
This breezy promontory, ever since
[1] The Viking with the commonest of names
Left there his Turkish heroine's memory,
Calling it "Tragabigzanda." English tongues
Relished not the huge mouthful; and a son,
Christening it for his mother, made Cape Anne
Bloom with yet one more thought of womanhood.

But never Orient princess, British queen,
Left on this headland such wild blossoming
Of romance dashed with pathos, — roses wet
With briny spray, for dew drops, — as to-day
Haunts the lone cottage of the fisherman,
In hopes half-suffocated by despair,
When the Old Salvages foam and gnash their teeth,
And all the battered coast is vexed with storms
Down the long trend of Maine, to Labrador.

Had Roger Conant, patriarch of the Cape,
Who left the Pilgrims as they left the Church,
To seek a fuller freedom than they gave, —
Freedom to worship God in the ancient way,
Clothing the spirit's heavenward flight with form, —
Had Roger Conant, kindliest of men,
One forethought of the flood of widow's tears
Wherewith this headland would be drenched, — the sea
Has no such bitter salt! — had he once dreamed
Of vessels wrecked by hundreds, amid shoals
And fogs of dim Newfoundland, he had left
Doughty Miles Standish an unchallenged claim
To every inch of coast, from Annisquam
To Marblehead. [1] "What?" said the Plymouth folk,
"Shall Conant seize our fishing-grounds? Shall he
Who went out from us, being not of us,
Take from our children's mouths their rightful food
For strangers who might stay at home, unstarved,
Unpersecuted? What does Conant mean?
Let Standish see!" The two met, face to face,
Lion and lamb; and first the lamb withdrew,
And then the lion; neither having found
Food for a quarrel on these ledges bare.
Standish sailed back to Plymouth; Conant sought
A quiet place, suiting a quiet man,
Lived unassuming years, and fell asleep
Among the green hills of Bass-River-Side.

So Tragabigzanda washed her granite feet,
Careless of rulers, in the eastern sea.
But still the hardy huntsmen of the deep
Clung to their rocky anchorage, and built
Homes for themselves, like sea-fowl, in the clefts.
And cabins grouped themselves in villages,
And billows echoed back the Sabbath bells,
And poetry bloomed out of barren crags,
With life, and love, and sorrow, and strong faith,
Like the rock-saxifrage, that seams the cliff,
Through all denials of east wind, sleet, and frost,
With white announcements of approaching spring:
Or like the gold-and-crimson columbines
That nod from crest and chasm, a merry crowd
Of rustic damsels tricked with finery,
Tossing their light heads in the sober air:
For Nature tires of her own gloom, and Sport
Laughs out through her solemnities, unchid.

The sailor is the playmate of the wave
That yawns to make a mouthful of him. Songs,
Light love-songs youth and joy lilt everywhere,
Catch sparkle from the sea, and echo back
Mirth unto merriment, — spray tossed toward spray.
Hark to the fisher, singing as he rocks,
A mote upon the mighty ocean-swell!

THE LITTLE BROWN CABIN.

I dream of it, tossing about in my skiff,
The little brown cabin just under the cliff:
The wild rose blown in at the window I see,
And Rose at the door, looking out after me;
My sweetheart, my wife,
The Rose of my life!

The sun in the doorway strikes gold from her hair;
The breeze fills the little brown house with salt air,
And she leans to its breath, as if over the sea
It were bringing a kiss and a message from me;
My pretty wild Rose,
The sweetest that grows!

I have not one wish from my darling apart:
The thought of her sweetens my soul and my heart:
And my boat like a bird flies across the blue sea
To the little brown cabin where Rose waits for me,
The Rose of my life,
My own blessed wife!

And hark — the gay voice of the skipper's bride!
The sea is but a wild delight to her,

Companion of her childhood, and its toy.
She loves no landsman, but her mariner
Lives in her heart, the very soul of the sea!

MY MARINER.

Oh, he goes away, singing,
  Singing over the sea!
Oh, he comes again, bringing
  Joy and himself to me!
Down through the rosemary hollow
  And up the wet beach I ran,
My heart in a flutter to follow
  The flight of my sailor man.

Fie on a husband sitting
  Still, in the house at home!
Give me a mariner, flitting
  And flashing over the foam!
Give me a voice resounding
  The songs of the breezy main!
Give me a free heart, bounding
  Evermore hither again!

Coming is better than going;
  But never was queen so grand

As I, while I watch him blowing
Away from the lazy land.
I have wedded an ocean-rover,
And with him I own the sea;
Yet over the waves, come over,
And anchor, my lad, by me!

Hark to his billowy laughter,
Blithe on the homeward tide!
Hark to it, heart! up and after —
Off to the harbor-side —
Down through the rosemary hollow,
And over the sand-hills, light
And swift as a sea-bird, follow!
And ho! for a sail in sight!

When the coast-country, from Bass River east
To Agawam, was known as Cape-Ann-Side,
Up from the ferry ran one winding road
Through pleasant Beverly, past Wenham Lake,
Losing itself in the Chebacco woods
Among a hidden chain of gem-like ponds: —
A cow-path, so the ancient gossips say,
Branching upon the left through Ryal-Side
To Salem Village; and upon the right,
Skirting the seashore, down through Jeffrey's Creek

And the magnolia-swamp, to Sandy Bay,
And Pigeon Cove, and sheltered Annisquam.
Thanks to the zig-zag pioneering kine
For picturesque roads, impossible to spoil
By levelling or by straightening. Two score years
Of memory, and we have them back again,
Lovely with Nature's care and man's neglect;
Lanes, and yet highways, bordered with all growths
Of the rich glens and the primeval woods.
The shyest bird trilled frankly his best song
In the low boughs above you: from cool nooks
The graceful sweet-brier leaned, to show the way,
When the June twilight deepened. Even now
You slip into these rose-roads unaware.
Just out of reach of landscape-gardeners,
And farmers beauty-blind, whose synonym
For poison-oak and rose is — underbrush!

Some flavor of the natural wildness left
Compensates you for groves too clean and trim,
The ubiquitous French roof, the shaven lawns,
The modern villas posing on the verge
Of roadside-precipices, consciously,
In the Rhine-castle manner, — everything
That hints of Nature closely taken in hand
By patronizing Wealth, and stroked and smoothed
Into surburban elegance. Weather-worn

And homely were the ancient farmhouses,
But well they harmonized with the old ways,
Old roads, old woods, old faces, and old friends,
And all the sweet old mystery we call home.

Alas! simplicity and homeliness
Are studied now, among the finer arts,
And the old words lose their meaning!
Still the heart
Of childhood remains fresh, and poverty
And hardship shut its unspoiled fragrance in
To their safe coffers. Crowds of rosy cheeks,
And eyes that mock the morning, seaward turned,
Where the pink sails at sunset faded out
Far, far northeast, when, outward-bound, the fleet
Left home and love behind, and steered away
For the Grand Banks or Georges', grow and bloom
Along the wayside, climbing the stone walls, —
Beckoning and smiling as wild roses do, —
Looking for those who never will return.
The fisher's child scarce knows if sea or shore
Is most his home; and yet must Georges' name —
The dragon-shoal that counts his wrecks by scores —
Bring dreams of nightmare-terror to the babe
Who hears it only through a mother's moan.

AT GEORGES'.

The children call out from the gate,
"Why is father staying so late?
We have almost forgotten his song,
So long since we heard it — so long!
The wind whistles after him over the sea;
We watch for him, shout for him; where can he be?
Oh, what is he doing at Georges'?
And why does he tarry at Georges'?"

The children have heard, through their sleep,
At nightfall, the sad mother weep:
"He will never, no, never again
Come singing through sunshine and rain:
They are cruel at Georges' as cruel can be;
A desolate widow and orphans are we:
He sleeps his last sleep at Georges';
He will never come home from Georges'."

Dreary indeed had been our fathers' lot, —
Fed and slain by the sea, — had they been poor
In faith as fortune! But they trusted Him
Who taketh up the isles, and holds the sea
In the deep hollow of His hand; and so,

Bereft, they were not friendless. Men went forth
Warmed by a benediction in God's name
Breathed through His minister. The meeting-house,
That saw a wanderer in his place again
Upon a Sabbath-day, resounded thanks.
And when dread tidings came, of vessels lost,
And crews gone down, words writ in widows' tears,
Through silence thick with heart-throbs, asked the prayers
Of all who loved them, that love's loss might bring
A "spiritual and everlasting good:" —
Always the same desire, the same strong phrase.

Are we, in our great churches, nearer God
Than they, that we have now no need to ask,
As persons, of a Person, of a Friend,
The help no human sympathy can give,
When sudden sorrow blinds us, and we see
Only a darkness, with His light behind?

Those dwellers by the sea believed in God:
Out of her need the widow heard Him say
"Thy Maker is thy husband;" and was sure
Her orphans would be cared for.
Nothing strange —
That where death wrought so ruthlessly his work,
Men grew to think of His as tenderer love

Than Calvin taught. And yet, the stern beliefs
That underlay the sinewy manliness
Of our dear State's first builders, — no great State
Had ever arisen without them. "Righteousness
Thy people's strength shall be;" — they wrote upon
Her fair foundation-stones; yet uneffaced;
Never to be effaced, — so let us pray!

The psalms of David in the singing-seats
Of the old meeting-house; — bass-viol, flute,
And tuning-fork, — and rows of village-girls,
With lips half-open, — treble clashed with bass
In most melodious madness, — voices shrill
Climbing for unreached keys, — grave burying soft
In solemn thunders; — fugues that rush and wait
Till lagging notes find the accordant goal, —
Who never heard, has forfeited, through youth,
A rare experience. Since the untrained choir
Could lift the congregation, as one soul,
Their singing was true worship; and what more
Ask we of any ministry of song?
The hymns themselves (men call them tedious now)
Made their own music in the reverent heart
That never criticised when it could praise.
The voice of an unnumbered multitude,
A sound of many waters, — echoes swept
From age to age, — the universal Church

Uttering her glad thanksgivings unto Him
Who saves her for Himself, a spotless Bride, —
Are in them — harmonies of deep to deep, —
The children with the fathers praising God.

THE OLD HYMNS.

Our homely past we cannot lose:
The witch-wife's tingling tale
Adds a weird sparkle to these dews,
Spices this eastern gale:

The war-whoop and the tomahawk
Left iron in the air;
The pilgrims' nerve and will of rock
Fell to their children's share.

But memory's voice grows low and thin;
As thunder, passing by,
Leaves a reverberating din,
Trailed faintly down the sky.

Still, wandering over field and hill,
And surging up the beach,
Are songs that wake a nobler thrill
Than our new singers teach.

The Psalm-tunes of the Puritan; —
The hymns that dared to go
Down shuddering through the abyss of man —
His gulfs of conscious woe:

That scaled the utmost height of bliss
Where the veiled seraph sings,
And worlds unseen brought down to this
On music's mighty wings:

The tunes the Plymouth Pilgrims sang
Upon the Mayflower's deck;
From hearts that knew no dread they rang,
And faith that feared no wreck.

The rapt strain hallowed the blue arch
Above the settler's farm,
And held him, in his forest march,
Closer to God's right arm.

Its sweetness drowned the savage yell
That jarred the Sabbath day,
And calmed, as with a halcyon spell,
The billows of the bay.

The mother lulled her babe to sleep
With those grand cadences,

And felt him folded safe and deep
Within God's mysteries.

And children's voices caught the sound,
And sent it up and down
In cherub-echoes, far around,
From seaside town to town.

From wild Nahant to Agawam,
Blent with the surf's hushed roar,
By creeks and curves of lonely Squam,
They floated down the shore.

The fisherman in Mackerel Cove
Rowed softly to the song;
By Mingo's Beach the farmer drove
More cheerily along;

And thought that He who died, still walked
Upon the Atlantic Sea,
On these wild hills with plain men talked,
As once in Galilee.

The green earth seemed an emerald floor;
The sky was sweet with prayer;
The sunset, heaven's wide open door;
Nay, heaven was everywhere.

Then is it strange that at the sound
  Of these old, hackneyed hymns,
The pulses give a homesick bound,
  The eye with moisture swims?

The long, quaint words, the hum-drum rhyme,
  The verse that reads like prose,
Are relics of a sturdier time
  Than modern childhood knows.

There comes a loss for every gain;
  Some good drifts hourly by;
We tear up aged roots with pain,
  Though the old trees must die.

The radiance of the former hope
  Still beckons in the new;
Dear is the present's widening scope,
  Dear the old landmark, too.

Ah! let us not forget the strength
  That more than beauty is;
The steadfast truth we prize at length
  Beyond weak tenderness!

And when we sing some hard old hymn,
  That rings like flint on steel,

Let not a shade of mockery dim
The flame its words reveal.

But let our piping treble sound
Harmonious as it may,
With music loftier, more profound,
Of singers passed away!

Cape Ann has her own poets, nightingales
Warbling among her roses, rarely heard,
Except by those who woke that minstrelsy; —
And she hath joy in other voices: hers
Who saw and pointed to the Gates Ajar
So earnestly, the world turned to look in;
And his whose rippling notes the Merrimack
Brings down to charm the coast with, — Avery's chant,
Surging up from the seas and centuries
In dying triumph, — and the marvellous tale
Of spectral soldiers at the garrison
In times of war and witchcraft; and that bard's
Whose tender Ballad of the Hesperus
Blooms, a sweet, pale, pathetic flower of song,
From the bare reef of Norman's Woe. Cool coves,
That open to blue breadths of sea; lost roads,
Wandering, bewildered, past forsaken homes,

House and inhabitant forgotten now,
And grass-grown cellar-hollows their sole sign;
Strange rocking-stones a-tilt for centuries;
White lily-ponds and dank magnolia-beds;
Sands that give music to your footstep; pines
Hoarse with forever answering the sea's moan, —
These will awaken to poetic life
In hearts of unborn minstrels. Though too late
For resurrection of dead legends now,
Though Woes and Miseries haunt us, unexplained,
Though all the dangerous coast is lighted up,
Safe as a city street by night, — the gleam
Of Straitsmouth, Eastern Point, and Ten Pound
Light,
And Thacher's Isle, twin-beaconed, winking back
To twinkling sister-eyes of Baker's Isle, —
Prosaic names await romantic births.
Man makes his own traditions; life and death
And love and sorrow baffle commonplace;
And poesy will find her wilderness
Of fancy to grow up in, blithely free
From pedant-theories of thus and so,
That fence the schools around.
Yon gaping gorge,
Where the sea wounds the half-unconscious land
Deeply and terribly, already knows
A tale more tragic than its name conceals,
Left by the visitors of a summer's day.

RAFE'S CHASM.

You come to it on level ground:
Sweet-fern and bayberry, close around,
The jutting crags hang over;
An echo of lost sound is Rafe,
The phantom of an unclaimed waif,
Doomed ever here to hover.

Rafe has no legend, but the chasm
Bears record of some torturing spasm
That wrenched these cliffs asunder,
When earth and sea in madness met;
The waves repeat their passion yet,
In throbs of rhythmic thunder.

A black gash torn into the land:
When tides are out, you safely stand
Within the abysmal hollow,
And see, across a shred of sky,
A pale rose look down tremblingly,
A swaying gull or swallow.

But when the sea returns, beware!
Though safely winds the cavern-stair,
Trust not the treacherous billow!

Rafe moans within his dungeon-gates;
A demon for his victim waits;
The smooth rock is death's pillow.

Just where you stand, a girl, one day,
Stood watching the impetuous play
Of surges bellowing after
The baby-waves with ponderous bound,
That made the gorge, far in, resound
With chords of savage laughter.

Unwrinkled as an infant's brow
The gray Sea's forehead; wondrous, how
Out of so deep a quiet
So wild a tumult could unfold!
What inward, vast restraint controlled
The elements in riot!

The calm of that great heaving breast
Lulled hers into enchanted rest;
The stealthy tide crept nearer.
She heard her comrades' warning call
Break sharply down the beetling wall,
Each instant sterner, clearer.

"Let me but wait for one wave more!"
The words were scarcely breathed, before
A mighty billow lifted

The heedless maiden high upon
His giant crest, — and she is gone!
Out into silence drifted.

What does the cold, bright ocean care
For shapes that gesture their despair
Against the blue sky yonder?
Laughs the dim demon of the cave:
Of one more victim he can rave,
When idlers hither wander.

Within his chasm, the ghost of Rafe
Sits like a mist, when east winds chafe
The muttering sea to anger;
A phantom maiden by his side,
With spell-bound eyes, that open wide
In trance of deathly languor.

Time and the waves wash lives away
Like wisps of sea-weed; each to-day
Is drowned in some to-morrow;
And grief hath ebb, as well as flow.
Who shall give back to Norman's Woe
Its unremembered sorrow?

Earth writes her ancient anguish out
In solid rock; no dream, no doubt;
Obliterated never.

Man's troubled history who explains?
The mystery of ourselves remains
Forever and forever!

An aged sorcerer is the Sea; the years
Reverberate his glamourie in myths
Washed down from unknown shores of time: — the wiles
Of that ensnaring goddess borne in foam
Upon the sands of Paphos; siren-songs
That wise Ulysses dared not trust himself
To listen to unbound; blind shoals and rocks
Where Circe made men beasts: and Proteus' arts;
Rages of Scylla and Charybdis; — myths
Which are but the vague murmurs of a sea
Forever surging in the soul of man.

Still the magician by his sorcery holds
All whom he hath enslaved: his grasp is firm;
His chains are riveted; and you are one
With the strange Power that will not let you go.

THE SEA'S BONDMAID.

I do not love the Sea;
And yet he draweth me,
As the moon draws the unwilling tide —
Restless forever — to his side.

All night awake I lie,
And hear him toss and sigh
In vague, unreasoning distress
At his own homeless loneliness.

I do not seek the Sea;
And yet he followeth me
With that weird, haunting voice of his,
Through the sweet inland silences.

I love the west wind's breath,
That softly wandereth
Out of the forest-fragrance deep,
A tryst of peace with me to keep.

Release me, sullen Sea!
I would be free of thee,
Far hidden among mountains green,
That laughing rivulets run between.

In vain! Thy monotone
Is as my own heart's moan:
Thy tides are pulses in my breast;
And thy unrest must be my rest!

And yet the ocean weds the shore, sometimes,
With perfect interchange of light and joy;
Gently caressing the green fields, that smile
To meet him, putting on their freshest robes;
Land-birds to sea-birds singing; pines and oaks
Hastening down to unite the melodies
Of bough and billow: such are the blue sea
And the bright coast that meet within the curves
You follow, loitering around Kettle Cove,
And Eagle Head, and past the Singing Sands,
And by the sea-fringed Farms of Beverly.

The loveliest scenery of that lovely town
Lay on its ocean border; miles of shore,
Verdant out to the verge of beach or cliff,
With varying tints of gardens, orchards, hills, —
Evergreen forests, intermixed with growth
Of the light maple and the glimmering birch;
And quaint old homesteads, whose colonial date
Was hid far back among the Indian wars; —

All washed by landlocked waters drowsily,
As by faint, lapsing, half-dreamed memories.

Beauty must still have contrast; yonder, see
Two tawny islands, floundering like whales
As near land as they dare, — The Miseries, —
The Great and Little Misery, made two
By a swift strait the cattle ford at ebb,
Ruminating as they wade. Mere lumps of earth, —
The least one takes the sea's brunt, — buttresses
And bastions worn by the besieging East.
Once, landing on this Little Misery,
I saw it white with everlasting-flowers, —
A snowy cloud upon the blue expanse,
Like those that float in heaven: I told myself
That other miseries might root amaranth.

ON THE MISERY.

Looking just off to the eastward
From the beautiful Beverly shore,
You will see two treeless islands
Stretching their blank before
The harbor-lights and the sea-waste gray,
A mile or more from the beach away.

These are the Misery Islands:
  The name has been handed down
From the twilight of lost tradition:
  The oldest man in the town
Has never heard his grandfather say
Why the Misery was the Misery.

They were clad in sombre forests
  When the earliest settler came;
And the old-time hunter found them
  A covert for noble game:
Every fish that swam, every fowl that flew,
The lonely nooks of the Misery knew.

They had cut off the trees for firewood
  Long ere my grandsire's birth;
Still the wild duck came to their shelter,
  And the loon, with his mocking mirth,
Made eddying inlet and pool resound,
When the sea was blue as the skies around.

The little ancestral cottage,
  Shut in by a hill-side wood,
With its windows opening seaward,
  In a bower of orchards stood;
Over the marshes, away from the road,
Its ample hearth-fire at evening glowed.

A pastoral, homelike picture;
Rocks, grainfields, and summer flowers;
But when the wind howled in the chimney,
And autumn shortened the hours,
To be safe underneath its friendly roof
Was pleasanter far than straying aloof.

My grandsire arose, sea-restless;
The red dawn was threatening rain:
"Don't go to the Misery, husband!"
The kind lips murmured in vain:
He took his fowling-piece from the beam,
And rowed away by the lurid gleam.

My grandmother put by her spinning;
The day had been eerie and chill;
The hoarse wind rattled the windows,
And bent the great pines on the hill:
She laid her children in bed with a prayer,
And sat by the firelight, full of care.

"What keeps him away after sunset?
So bleak on the Misery —
And the night shutting in so stormy!
I wish he were here!" thought she.
When a wilder gust down the chimney blew,
And she heard the voice that so well she knew.

Louder than shriek of the tempest,
Clearer than ocean's rote,
She heard the cry of her husband:
"Wife! I have lost the boat!"
Nor thought for a moment it could not be,
With the Misery out a mile in the sea.

She latched the door on her children;
She wrapped her head from the blast,
And into the rain-drenched forest
With the speed of a wild deer passed
Through the starless lane, and the long, dark road
That led where her nearest kinsmen abode.

They turned to her, dazed and startled.
Had the storm burst in at the door?
What was it — a half-drowned woman,
Or a ghost, so white on the floor?
"My husband's adrift on the Misery;
Go you and fetch him away!" said she.

"He went his gun and his dory,
And the boat has been washed away;
He is there, without food or a shelter!"
"And how can you know it?" ask they,
"He called, and I heard him." — "A woman's whim!
Who faces this furious gale for him?"

"Either I, or you, his brethren:
Go you, or myself will go!
The Hand that controls the tempest
Steers safely, and I can row!"
"Nay, stay you here by the fireside warm!
You never could weather so wild a storm."

They steer through the seething darkness;
The voyage is quickly made;
They have found him, watching and waiting,
As one who expected aid:
And he only said, as the boat drew near,
"I knew that God or my wife would hear."

A silent man was my grandsire;
But, half-way home through the wood,
He said, with a doubt born of safety, —
"Wife, surely you never could,
In a gale so fearful, have heard my call,
Except by some witchcraft, after all!

"For it died on the wind like a whisper;
I scarcely could draw my breath,
And my voice was weak as a baby's,
While the sleet fell, cold as death!"
"Yes; witchcraft, husband! but such alone
As wives who are faithful have always known."

Oh, Love is a wonderful wizard;
He can see by his own keen light:
He laughs at the wrath of the tempest;
He has never a fear of the night.
Two lives that are wedded, leagues hold not apart:
Love can hear, even through thunder, the beat of a heart!

A sunny, sea-blown cottage-nook was that, —
My father's home, his grandsire's father's home, —
Set where, as from a shoulder, her green cloak
The land trails to the ocean, and begins
The reach of Cape-Ann-Side. Upon the hills
The apple-trees met the descending pines;
Sweet-brier and garden-roses intertwined;
Nature and cultivation joined their hands
To make a home-like place; — so buttercups
And daisies, dropped with English grass-seed, grew
Among strange blooms of the aboriginal woods,
And cheered the Pilgrim-women with a thought
Of dear haunts left behind; their children now
Scarce know Old England's wild flowers from our own,
But love the naturalized as the natural. —
So in the human world, without, within,
Orson and Valentine live brotherly; —
Though art needs nature more than nature art.

A sunny, sea-blown nook, it gathered in
All strays and waifs: loose drifts of slavery,
Stranded in pitiful helplessness, dead weight
Upon their master's hands; or the lone shape
Of some Acadian exile — Gabriel
Homesick for his Evangeline — whose grief
Found no unburdening through his lips: not one
Who needed food or shelter turned aside,
Albeit a patriarchal family
Outgrew and overgrew the gambrel eaves, —
A line of stalwart boys and vigorous girls,
Whose hands were their sole fortune; character
And trust in God their sole inheritance.
The boys went forth to face the winds and waves,
Hunters by sea and land: the girls grew up,
Loving, hardworking, patient homekeepers,
Their minds fresh with sea-freedom; all heaven's
room
In the large aspiration of their faith.

Thank God for those old-fashioned sea-side folk,
And for the home that rooted their strong lives
For many generations. Virtues far
Outperfuming the rose, — pure souls, untouched
By the world's frosty standards, — are not these
True growths of our New England atmosphere,
By rarest of exotics unreplaced?

Strangers have found that landscape's beauty out,
And hold its deeds and titles. But the waves
That wash the quiet shores of Beverly,
The winds that gossip with the waves, the sky
That immemorially bends, listening,
Have reminiscences that still assert
Inalienable claims from those who won,
By sweat of their own brows, this heritage.
Fibres will cling, and odors haunt: the Past
Blooms deathless in the unforgetting heart, —
A birthright flower, an immortality!

MY NAME-AUNT.

I can see her, as she grew
By the sea, in spray and dew,
Little girl and woman too.

Childhood soberly she wears,
Taking hold of woman's cares
Through love's outreach, unawares.

Glint of ocean, depth of sky,
Tenderness, intensity,
Blending in her large blue eye.

Fair she must have been, in sooth,
While the freshness of her youth
Blossomed out of inward truth;

Where the pathos of the wave
To her maiden feelings gave
Wistful wonder, sweetness grave.

Everybody called her good,
When, with steady feet, she stood
On the heights of womanhood.

Ere I saw her, locks of brown
Into silvery bands had grown;
Age had placed on her his crown.

Still in dreams her face I view, —
Noblest that my childhood knew, —
Motherly and saintly too.

Seriously my eyes she read;
Laid her hand upon my head, —
Once — again, — two brief words said:

Liquid syllables, that fell
On my child-heart like a spell:
My name, borne by her so well.

Softly, with a yearning grace,
Said she, searching still my face,—
"Never, dear, the name disgrace!"

Since that hour, I wear a charm
In the charge she gave; her arm
Shields from many an unseen harm.

And I bless her for an aim
Fixed upon the Best, that came
As my portion, with her name:

Name she gave me, that confers
Honor in its characters;
Standing for a life like hers.

And I fain would make it sweet
For the sea-winds to repeat
Where she strayed, with childish feet;

Down the beach, and through the wood,
Where she grew so gently good
In her wild-rose maidenhood.

A STRIP OF BLUE.

I DO not own an inch of land,
  But all I see is mine, —
The orchards and the mowing-fields,
  The lawns and gardens fine.
The winds my tax-collectors are,
  They bring me tithes divine, —
Wild scents and subtle essences,
  A tribute rare and free;
And, more magnificent than all,
  My window keeps for me
A glimpse of blue immensity, —
  A little strip of sea.

Richer am I than he who owns
  Great fleets and argosies;
I have a share in every ship
  Won by the inland breeze,
To loiter on yon airy road
  Above the apple-trees.
I freight them with my untold dreams;
  Each bears my own picked crew;

And nobler cargoes wait for them
  Than ever India knew, —
My ships that sail into the East
  Across that outlet blue.

Sometimes they seem like living shapes, —
  The people of the sky, —
Guests in white raiment coming down
  From heaven, which is close by ;
I call them by familiar names,
  As one by one draws nigh.
So white, so light, so spirit-like,
  From violet mists they bloom !
The aching wastes of the unknown
  Are half reclaimed from gloom,
Since on life's hospitable sea
  All souls find sailing-room.

The ocean grows a weariness
  With nothing else in sight ;
Its east and west, its north and south,
  Spread out from morn to night ;
We miss the warm, caressing shore,
  Its brooding shade and light.
A part is greater than the whole ;
  By hints are mysteries told.
The fringes of eternity, —
  God's sweeping garment-fold,

In that bright shred of glimmering sea,
I reach out for and hold.

The sails, like flakes of roseate pearl,
Float in upon the mist;
The waves are broken precious stones, —
Sapphire and amethyst
Washed from celestial basement walls,
By suns unsetting kissed.
Out through the utmost gates of space,
Past where the gray stars drift,
To the widening Infinite, my soul
Glides on, a vessel swift,
Yet loses not her anchorage
In yonder azure rift.

Here sit I, as a little child;
The threshold of God's door
Is that clear band of chrysoprase;
Now the vast temple floor,
The blinding glory of the dome
I bow my head before.
Thy universe, O God, is home,
In height or depth, to me;
Yet here upon thy footstool green
Content am I to be;
Glad when is opened unto my need
Some sea-like glimpse of Thee.

THE LADY ARBELLA.[1]

THE good ship Arbella is leading the fleet
Away to the westward, through rain-storm and sleet;
The white cliffs of England have dropped out of sight,
As birds from the warmth of their nest taking flight
Into wider horizons, each fluttering sail
Follows fast where the Mayflower fled on the gale
With her resolute Pilgrims, ten winters before, —
And the fire of their faith lights the sea and the shore.

[1] Written for the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the landing of Governor Winthrop at Salem, Massachusetts, June 22d (or O. S. June 12th), 1630.

The Arbella was anchored from Saturday to Monday, inside the islands, just off the shore of Beverly, then called Bass-River-Side; and many of the people went ashore and gathered wild strawberries, — as is recorded by Winthrop in his Journal.

The story of Lady Arbella, daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, and wife of Mr. Isaac Johnson, — the narrative of the long and stormy voyage of Winthrop's fleet to our shores, and her death, followed by that of her husband, within three months after their arrival, are familiar to the readers of our earliest colonial history.

There are yeomen and statesmen; the learned and rude,
One brotherhood; jealousy cannot intrude
Between heart and heart; with one purpose they go, —
To knit life to life, a new nation, and grow
In the strength of the Lord. There are maidens discreet,
And saintliest matrons; but none is so sweet
As the delicate blush-rose from Lincoln's old hall,
The Lady Arbella, the flower of them all.

Beloved and loving, one stands at her side,
A bridegroom well matched with so lovely a bride:
Wise Winthrop is balancing care in his mind
For the colony's weal, for the wife left behind;
And godly and tolerant Phillips is there,
To comfort his shipmates with blessing and prayer:
One and all, they have taken their lives in their hand
To be scattered as seed in a wilderness land.

There is hope in their eyes, though it gleams through regret;
They go not as those who can lightly forget
The Church, their dear mother, — the land of their birth,
In the glamour that flushes an unexplored earth, —

A limitless continent, fringing the rim
Of the silent sea vastness with promises dim;
And their love, reaching back from the voyage begun,
Links Old and New England forever as one.

They drift through blank midnight; they toss in the mist,
Blown hither and thither as wild winds may list;
Moons wane, ere a glimpse of the land that they seek
Breaks the chaos of billow and fog: though the cheek
Of Arbella grows pale, with a clear, kindling eye,
She says, "It is well that we go, though we die."
And the heart of the bridegroom beats high at her side,
In response to the undismayed heart of his bride.

And still, side by side, they keep watch on the deck,
Till the faint shore approaches — an outline — a speck
That wavers and sinks, and arises again,
Undefined, on the outermost verge of the main.
And lo! on a golden June morning, a smell
As of blossoming gardens, borne over the swell
Of the weltering brine; cliff and headland that dip
Their green robes in the sea, leaning out to the ship!

And shining above them, afar on the sky
Where the coast-line trends inland, the snow-summits high,
A glimmer of crystal! The lady's rapt gaze
Lingers long on that wonder of filmy white haze,
As a vision of mountains celestial, that rise
On the soul of the dying, who nears Paradise.
Did she know, could she dream, that to her it was given
But to touch at this new world, and pass on to heaven?

There looms Agamenticus; beckons Cape Ann;
There a smoke-wreath reveals Masconomo's red clan,
Or the camp-fire of settlers; and here a canoe,
Here a shallop steers out to the storm-beaten crew.
The low islands part, as an opening door,
And they glide in, and anchor in sight of the shore,
Where the wild roses' fragrance, the strawberries' scent,
With the music of song-bird and billow is blent.

Did the Lady Arbella's light foot touch the beach?
Did the sweet-brier sway to her laugh and her speech?
Waves wash away foot-prints; winds sweep from the air

Glad echoes, fresh odors ; — her memory is there:
And the wild rose is sweeter on Bass-River-Side
For breathing where once breathed the sweet English bride;
And the moan of the surges a pathos has caught
From her presence there, brief as the flight of a thought.

Grave Endicott welcomes his beautiful guest:
At last in the wilderness shall she find rest,
And dream of the cities to rise at her feet
In a nation where mercy and righteousness meet?
Dear Lady Arbella! so brave and so meek!
Too fragile a flower for this atmosphere bleak, —
When the rose shed its petals on Bass-River-Side,
The blush-rose of Lincoln had faded and died.

But a soul cannot fail of its gracious intent;
We are known, and we live, through the good that we meant.
The seed will spring up, that was watered with tears;
If an angel looked on, through those first dreary years
Of the colony's childhood, and bore up its prayer,
The spirit of Lady Arbella was there;
And to whatever Eden her footsteps have flown,
New England still claims her — forever our own!

For the lady arose to her womanhood then,
When gentry and yeomanry simply were men
In communion of hardship. All honor be theirs
Whose names on her forehead the Commonwealth wears, —
Who planted the roots of our freedom! Nor yet
The blossoms that died in transplanting forget, —
The true-hearted women who perished beside
The Lady Arbella, the fair English bride!

SWEET-BRIER.

Rose, with a fragrance diffused,
Of crushed gums and spicery bruised,
Through petal and stem and leaf, —
Thou art as the presence of one
Through deep glens of Paradise gone,
Far beyond reach of my grief.

Thy soft lamp illumines the dell;
The gray granite smiles in thy spell;
Pink torch of the pasture's brown gloom,
Thy lithe boughs, that gracefully sway,
Thy delicate odors, to-day
Restore me her womanly bloom.

Wild buds awoke under her hand;
Rare blossoms would rise and expand
In the heaven of her eyes' blessed blue;
And her heart and her being were flowers
That lit up the desolate hours,
And, storm-beaten, lovelier grew.

Spirit, that madest earth sweet,
Across barren hill-sides my feet
    Go seeking thee, missing thee still;
Yet thy love in my life doth remain,
A memory that pierces to pain, —
    A perfume, a pathos, a thrill.

If a blossom from heaven could lean,
A rose-flush, a glory of green
    Trailing over the blank wall of death,
I think it would bring back to me
A waft of fresh woodlands and thee, —
    Sweet-Brier, her soul in thy breath!

MISTRESS HALE OF BEVERLY.[1]

THE roadside forests here and there were touched
with tawny gold;
The days were shortening, and at dusk the sea
looked blue and cold;
Through his long fields the minister paced, restless,
up and down;
Before, the land-locked harbor lay; behind, the little
town.

No careless chant of harvester or fisherman awoke
The silent air; no clanging hoof, no curling weft of
smoke,

[1] "What finally broke the spell by which they had held the minds of the whole colony in bondage was their accusation, in October, of Mrs. Hale, the wife of the minister of the First Church in Beverly. Her genuine and distinguished virtues had won for her a reputation, and secured in the breasts of the people a confidence which superstition itself could not sully nor shake. Mr. Hale had been active in all the previous proceedings; but he knew the innocence and piety of his wife, and he stood forth between her and the storm he had helped to raise. The whole community became convinced that the accusers in crying out upon Mrs. Hale had perjured themselves; and from that moment their power was destroyed." — Upham's *Salem Witchcraft.*

Where late the blacksmith's anvil rang; all dumb as death, — and why?
Why? echoed back the minister's chilled heart, for sole reply.

His wife was watching from the door; she came to meet him now,
A weary sadness in her voice, a care upon her brow;
A vague, oppressive mystery, a hint of unknown fear,
Hung hovering over every roof: it was the witchcraft year.

She laid her hand upon his arm, and looked into his face,
And as he turned away, she turned, beside him keeping pace:
And, "Oh, my husband, let me speak," said gentle Mistress Hale,
"For truth is fallen in the street, and falsehoods vile prevail.

"The very air we breathe is thick with whisperings of hell:
The foolish trust the quaking bog, where wise men sink as well,

Who follow them : O husband mine, for love of me,
beware
Of touching slime that from the pit is oozing every-
where.

"The rulers and the ministers, tell me, what have
they done,
Through all the dreadful weeks since this dark in-
quest was begun,
Save to encourage thoughtless girls in their unhal-
lowed ways,
And bring to an untimely end many a good woman's
days?

"Think of our neighbor, Goodwife Hoar, — because
she would not say
She was in league with evil powers, she pines in jail
to-day :
Think of our trusty field-hand, Job, — a swaggerer,
it is true, —
Boasting he feared no Devil, they have condemned
him too.

"And Bridget Bishop, when she lived yonder at
Ryal-Side,
What if she kept a shovel-board, and trimmed with
laces wide

Her scarlet boddice; grant she was too frivolous
and vain, —
How dared they take away the life they could not
give again?

"Nor soberness availeth aught; for who hath suf-
fered worse,
Through persecutions undeserved, than good Re-
becca Nurse?
Forsaken of her kith and kin, alone in her de-
spair,
It almost seemed as if God's ear were closed against
her prayer.

"They spare not even infancy: poor little Dorcas
Good,
The vagrant's child, — but four years old! — who
says that baby could
To Satan sign her soul away, condemns this busi-
ness blind,
As but the senseless babbling of a weak and wicked
mind.

"Is it not like the ancient tale they tell of Phae-
ton,
Whose ignorant hands were trusted with the horses
of the sun?

Our teachers now by witless youths are led on and
beguiled:
Woe to the land, the Scripture saith, whose ruler is
a child?

"God grant this dismal day be short! Except help
soon arrive,
To ruin these deluded ones will our fair country
drive.
If I to-morrow were accused, what further could I
plead
Than those who died, whom neither judge nor min-
ister would heed?

"I pray thee, husband, enter not their councils any
more!
My heart aches with forebodings! Do not leave me,
I implore!
Yet if to turn this curse aside my life might but
avail,
In Christ's name would I yield it up," said gentle
Mistress Hale.

The minister of Beverly dreamed a strange dream
that night;
He dreamed the tide came up, blood-red, through
inlet, cove, and bight,

Till Salem Village was submerged; until Bass River
rose,
A threatening crimson gulf, that yawned the ham-
let to inclose.

It rushed in at the cottage-doors whence women fled
and wept;
Close to the little meeting-house with serpent curves
it crept;
The grave-mounds in the burying-ground were sunk
beneath its flood;
The doorstone of the parsonage was dashed with
spray of blood.

And on the threshold, praying, knelt his dear and
honored wife,
As one who would that deluge stay at cost of her
own life. —
"O save her! save us, Christ!" the cry unlocked
him from his dream,
And at his casement in the east he saw the day-star
gleam.

The minister that morning said, "Only this once
I go,
Beloved wife; I cannot tell if witches be or no;

We on the judgment-throne have sat in place of
God too long:
I fear me much lest we have done His flock a
grievous wrong:

"And this before my brethren will I testify to-day."
Around him quiet wooded isles and placid waters
lay,
As unto Salem-Side he crossed. He reached the
court-room small,
Just as a shrill, unearthly shriek, echoed from wall to
wall:

"Woe! Mistress Hale tormenteth me! She came
in like a bird,
Perched on her husband's shoulder!" Then silence
fell; no word
Spake either judge or minister, while with profound
amaze
Each fixed upon the other's face his horror-stricken
gaze.

But, while the accuser writhed in wild contortions
on the floor,
One rose and said, "Let all withdraw! the court is
closed!" no more:

For well the land knew Mistress Hale's rare loveliness and worth;
Her virtues bloomed like flowers of heaven along the paths of earth.

The minister of Beverly went homeward riding fast;
His wife shrank back from his strange look, affrighted and aghast.
"Dear wife, thou ailest! Shut thyself into thy room!" said he,
"Whoever comes, the latch-string keep drawn in from all save me!"

Nor his life's treasure from close guard did he one moment lose,
Until across the ferry came a messenger with news
That the bewitched ones acted now vain mummeries of woe;
The judges looked and wondered still, but all the accused let go.

The dark cloud rolled from off the land; the golden leaves dropped down
Along the winding wood-paths of the little sea-side town:

In Salem Village there was peace; with witchcraft-trials passed
The nightmare-terror from the vexed New England air at last.

Again in natural tones men dared to laugh aloud and speak;
From Naugus Head the fisher's shout rang back to Jeffrey's Creek;
The phantom-soldiery withdrew, that haunted Gloucester shore;
The teamster's voice through Wenham Woods broke into psalms once more.

The minister of Beverly thereafter sorely grieved
That he had inquisition held with counsellors deceived;
Forsaking love's unerring light, and duty's solid ground,
And groping in the shadowy void, where truth is never found.

Errors are almost trespasses; rarely indeed we know
How our mistakes hurt other hearts, until some random blow

Has well-nigh broken our own. Alas! regret could not restore
To lonely hearths the presences that gladdened them before.

As with the grain our fathers sowed sprang up Old England's weeds,
So to their lofty piety clung superstition's seeds.
Though tares grow with it, wheat is wheat: by food from heaven we live;
Yet whoso asks for daily bread, must add, "Our sins forgive!"

Truth made transparent in a life, tried gold of character,
Were Mistress Hale's; and this is all that history says of her;
Their simple force, like sunlight, broke the hideous midnight spell,
And sight restored again to eyes obscured by films of hell.

The minister's long fields are still with dews of summer wet:
The roof that sheltered Mistress Hale tradition points to yet.

Green be her memory ever kept all over Cape-Ann-Side.
Whose unobtrusive excellence awed back delusion's tide!

SYLVIA.

"SYLVIA!" The happy face looked up,
With love's unvoiced reply;
Beneath his, deep light brimmed her eye,
As a blue blossom fills its cup
From fulness of the sky.

Sylvia! It was her wedding-day:
Her story seemed complete:
No voice had made her name so sweet
Along the rustic maiden's way,—
So rhythmic to repeat.

The sylvan, quaint, romantic name
Had drifted to her door
From the Atlantic's eastern shore,
Where some ancestral English dame
Its style Arcadian wore.

But here it breathed of rose and fern,
And salt winds of Cape Ann;

Of timid wild-flowers hid from man
Behind the gray cliffs' barrier stern,
In woods where shy streams ran.

And they twain wandered in a wood
By vague sea-whisperings swept;
To soul, through sense, fine odors crept;
Within the northern air, the mood
Of tropic sunshine slept.

'Mid sassafras and wintergreen,
Elder and meadow-rue,
In dazzling bridal-raiment new, —
Glorious in exile as a queen, —
The white magnolia grew.

"Sylvia! my own magnolia flower!"
The proud young husband said:
With creamy buds he crowned her head;
And Sylvia smiled, and blessed the hour
Of summer she was wed.

The years went on, and Sylvia grew
Pale at her work, and thin.
The pair no green woods wandered in;
Cold through the corn the north-wind blew;
Their bread was hard to win.

Furrowed his brow became, and stern,
As his own farm-lands rough.
He called her "Wife!" in accents gruff.
Why should she for her girl-name yearn?
Was she not his? Enough.

Enough! — enough to fill the bound
Of woman's heart is he
Who leaves no heaven-growth in her free —
Who guards not for her what he found
Her life of life to be?

The tired wife's woodland name to her
Gospels of freedom meant;
And he with every dream was blent:
His "Sylvia!" in her soul could stir
Long ripples of content.

But now for dreary weeks and years
Her name he never spoke.
Into no storm her dull dawns broke;
Life was not sad enough for tears;
Her heart more slowly broke.

Sometimes, deep in an oaken chest
With ample linen filled,

The touch of a dead blossom thrilled
Into blind pain sweet thoughts repressed,
And in long silence chilled:

Again the rich magnolia breathed
Through the New England air
Its hint of Southern summers rare;
Again her head the warm buds wreathed;
Her bridegroom twined them there.

She shut the chest: she would not think
Her life the dry pressed flower
She knew it was. Yet hour on hour
More stifling grew; and lock and link
Crushed down with steadier power.

He boasted of her skilful hands,
Her quick, unresting feet.
"No woman like my wife I meet:
On all the Cape none understands
How to make home so neat."

She, proud to be her husband's pride,
For bread received a stone.
Love lives not on such bread alone;
And hungry longings woke and cried
For better things unknown.

Only by toil the wife could keep
Her girl-heart's clamor down.
Care's ashes all her tresses brown
Sprinkled with gray. An early sleep
Came death, life's ache to drown.

When, by the blank around, he knew
What she had been to him,
And, in remorseful guesses dim,
Measured the joy she failed of, too,
Thought bittered to its brim.

He sought the sea-washed woods, where tall
Black pines at noon made night:
The flowers stood still in lovely light:
He seemed to hear his dead bride call
From every blossom white.

The warm-breathed, fresh magnolia-bloom
In hands that never stirred,
He laid, with one beseeching word, —
"Sylvia!" — that pierced death's gathering gloom:
Her soul smiled back: she heard!

FLOWER OF GRASS.

THE gracefulness that homely life takes on
When love is at its root, you saw in her;
No color, but soft tints in lovely blur, —
A charm which if so much as named was gone,
Like light out of a passing cloud. Yet when
The fairer faces bloomed on you alone,
Without the softening of her presence, then
Into their look had something garish grown, —
Some tenderness had faded from the air, —
A loss so subtle and so undefined
The thought was blamed that hinted loss was there.

The nature of such souls is to be blind
To self, and to self-seeking; let them blend
Their life as harmony and atmosphere
With other lives; let them but have a friend
Whose merit they may set off or endear,
And they are gladder than in any guess
Or dream of their own separate happiness.

Earth were not sweet without such souls as hers:
Even of the rose and lily might we tire;
She was the flower of grass, that only stirs
To soothe the air, and nothing doth require
But to forget itself in doing good, —
One of life's lowly, saintly multitude.

MEHETABEL.

MEHETABEL'S knitting lies loose in her hand;
She watches the gold of a broken red brand
That glitters and flashes,
And falls into ashes:
The flame that illumines her face
From the cavernous, black fire-place,
Brings ever new wonders of color and shade
To flicker about her, and shimmer, and fade.
Does any one guess
Of this maid's loveliness,
That the lonesome and smoky old room seems to bless?

Mehetabel's mother calls out of the gloom,
From a clatter of shovel and kettle and broom,
From her flurry and worry
Of work-a-day hurry:
"Our Hetty sits there in a dream,
With her needles half round to the seam;
With nothing to vex her, and nothing to try her;
But never will she set the river afire."

And back to the din
Of iron and tin,
One shadow flits out, while another steals in.

Mehetabel's lover through new-fallen snow
So softly has come that the maid does not know
He is standing behind her,
So happy to find her
Alone, that he hardly can speak:
A whisper, — a flush on her cheek
More lovely than sunset's reflection by far; —
"O Hetty," he murmurs, "the white evening star
And the beacon-lights swim
On the ocean's blue rim,
But I see your sweet eyes, and they make the stars dim."

Mehetabel's wooer is stalwart and tall;
His figure looms dark on the flame-lighted wall.
Outside in pale shadow
Lie pasture and meadow;
Dim roselight is on the white hill;
The sea glimmers purple and chill: —
"O Hetty, be mine for the calm and the storm!
Though cold be the wide world, my heart's love is warm;

Knit me into your dream,
And my rude life will seem
Like a beautiful landscape in June's golden beam."

Mehetabel's forehead has gathered a cloud;
A thousand new thoughts to her young bosom crowd;
Her knitting drops lower;
No lover can show her
The way through her mind's tangled maze.
He reads no response in her gaze:
Her heart is a snow-drift where foot never trod;
Love's sun has not wakened a bud on its sod;
And pure as the glow
Of the stars on the snow,
Are the glances that up through her long lashes go.

Mehetabel's future, an unexplored land,
Spreads vaguely before her, unpeopled and grand,
Its wild paths wait lonely
For her footsteps only;
She must weave out the web of her dream,
Though flimsy and worthless it seem
To her mother's eye, filled with the dust-motes of care;
Though it bar up her path from the heart that beats there

In the rich, ruddy gloom,
Breathing odor and bloom,
And sweet sense of life through the dusk of the room.

Mehetabel's dream, — you will guess it in vain;
Only half to herself is unwound the bright skein.
She is but a woman,
As gentle as human;
Yet rooted in hearts fresh as hers,
Is the hope that the universe stirs;
And broad be her thought as life's measureless zone,
Or narrow as self is, it still is her own;
And alone she may dare
What she never would share
With friendship the dearest, or love the most rare.

Mehetabel's answer — it has not been told.
To ashes has fallen the firelight's red gold:
No mother, no lover,
For her, the world over:
The work-a-day jangle is still;
An empty house stands on the hill:
The rafters are cobwebbed, the ceiling is bare;
But always a wraith haunts the carved oaken chair:

And early and late
There 's a creak at the gate,
And a wind through the room, with a soft sigh of
"Wait!"

Mehetabel — Hetty — the dream of a dream,
The film of a snow-cloud, a star's broken beam,
Were a tangible story
To hers; but the glory
Of ages dims down to a spark,
And dies out at last in the dark,
Among questions unanswered, unrealized dreams:
Still the beautiful cheat of what may be and seems,
Flashes up on night's brink,
When the live embers blink,
And the tales that they mutter we dream that we
think.

FERN-LIFE.

Yes, life! though it seems half a death,
When the flowers of the glen
Bend over, with color and breath,
Till we tremble again;

Till we shudder with exquisite pain
Their beauty to see;
While our dumb hope, through fibre and vein
Climbs up to be free.

No blossom — scarce leaf — on the ground,
Vague fruitage we bear, —
Point upward, reach fingers around,
In a tender despair.

And we pencil rare patterns of grace
Men's footsteps about:
A charm in our wilderness-place
They find us, no doubt.

Yet why must this possible more
  Forever be less ?
The unattained flower in the spore
  Hints a human distress.

We fern-folk with grave whispers crowd
  The solemn wood-gloom,
Or weave over clods our green cloud
  Of nebulous bloom.

To fashion our life as a flower,
  In weird curves we reach, —
O man, with your beautiful power
  Of presence and speech !

Yet the heart of the human must grope
  Through its nobler despair ;
For it can but look upward, and hope
  All perfection to share.

And to dream of the sweetness we miss
  Is not wholly in vain ;
For the soul can be glad in a bliss
  It may never attain.

PHEBE.

PHEBE, idle Phebe,
On the door-step in the sun,
Drops the ripe-red currants
Through her fingers, one by one.
Heedless of her pleasant work,
Rebel murmurs rise and lurk
In the dimples of her mouth:
Winds come perfumed from the South;
Musical with swarms of bees
Are the overhanging trees:
Phebe does not care
If the world is fair.
"Phebe! Phebe!"
It was but a wandering bird
That pronounced the word.

Phebe, listless Phebe,
Leaves the currants on the stem,
Saying, "Since he comes not,
Labor 's lost in picking them;"

Loiters down the alleys green
Crowds of blushing pinks between,
Followed by a breeze that goes
Whispering secrets of the rose.
Does that saucy bird's keen eye
Read her heart, as he flits by?
Syllables that mock
Haunt the garden-walk:
"Phebe! Phebe!"
Lilac-thickets hid among,
His refrain is sung.

Phebe, wistful Phebe,
Leans upon the mossy wall:
Nothing stirs the stillness
Save a trickling brooklet's fall.
Phebe's eyes, against her will,
Seek the village on the hill. —
"If he knew he had the power
So to chill and change the hour, —
Knew the pain to me it is
His approaching step to miss, —
Knew the blank, the ache,
His neglect can make," —
"Phebe! Phebe!"
From a neighboring forest-roof
Echoed the reproof.

Phebe, troubled Phebe,
With the brook still murmurs on;
"If he knew how sunshine
Pales and thins when he is gone, —
Knew that I, who seem so cold,
Lock up tenderness untold, —
As the full midsummer glow
Hides its live roots under snow, —
In my heart's warm silence deep,
And for him that hoard must keep
Till he brings the key, —
Would he scoff at me?"
"Phebe! Phebe!"
The receding singer's throat
Shaped a warning note.

"Phebe, darling Phebe!" —
Like a startled fawn she turns:
Over cheek and forehead
Swift the rising rose-flush burns.
"Sweetheart, if you only knew —
That my life's one dream is — you!"
"Hence, eavesdropper!" though she cried,
Gentle eyes her lips belied:
Lost in foolish lover-chat,
Picking currants they two sat,
Till a woodland bird

Sent his good-night word, —
"Phebe! Phebe!"
In faint mockery, as he fled
Through the evening-red.

IN THE AIR.

THE scent of a blossom from Eden!
The flower was not given to me,
But it freshened my spirit forever,
As it passed, on its way to thee!

In my soul is a lingering music:
The song was not meant for me,
But I listen, and listen, and wonder
To whom it can lovelier be.

The sounds and the scents that float by us —
They cannot tell whither they go;
Yet, however it fails of its errand,
Love makes the world sweeter, I know.

I know that love never is wasted,
Nor truth, nor the breath of a prayer;
And the thought that goes forth as a blessing
Must live, as a joy in the air.

BESSIE AND RUTH.

Above them, the meadow-lark's call
  Rose, piercing the tremulous ether,
As they clambered across the stone wall,
  And came through the lane together:
    Two girls, in their gowns of blue,
    With their milking-pails, came through
Red waves of the wind-shaken clover:
    And the bloom of the grass dropped dew,
    And the dawn into sunrise grew,
As they loitered talking it over, —
      Talking a love-secret over.

Their secret; they thought it was hid,
  But the wren and the bob-o'-link knew it;
And a wood-thrush, the alders amid,
  To his mate in a flute-echo threw it:
    They talked of two lads on the sea;
    They talked of two weddings to be;
And a rose-colored future each wove her; —
    Two hearts that were fettered, yet free, —

In the shade of a green-golden tree
As they lingered, talking it over, —
Talking the old story over.

They climbed the bleak slopes of a cliff
Made warm by the footsteps of summer ;
And each asked the solemn waves if
They had heard of a laggard home-comer.
Mist-flushed with the heats of July,
The white, silent vessels went by ;
But neither saw sign of her rover :
And the deeps of Ruth's dreamy blue eye
Were ruffled by Bessie's long sigh,
While the slow waves murmured it over, —
Murmured the mystery over.

They parted at dusk on the beach ;
The third moon of harvest was waning :
A yearning was in their low speech,
As of billow to billow complaining.
To Bessie, the deep faith of Ruth
Lapsed sad as the ebb-tide of youth ;
And the stars in the sky-gulf above her
Sank chill as her dumb thoughts, in sooth;
For she doubted her own maiden-truth,
Dreaming another love over, —
Wondering, dreaming it over.

The lark's note pierced heaven again;
And again, in the June-lighted weather,
The footsteps of two in the lane,
Kept time to a love-tune together.
The gossip of bluebird and thrush
Slid lightly from tree-top to bush,
And shook with faint laughter the clover:
And the sweet-brier bent with a blush
That warned the pert blackbird to hush,
While Bessie went by with her lover,
Talking her second love over.

Ruth came through the brown fields alone
To the sea, veiled in gray of November:
Dead leaves rustled past; with a moan
Strove the wind to revive autumn's ember.
But the youth-light shone on in her eye,
And a joy in her heart, sweet and high,
Sang clearer than curlew or plover.
There is hope that is never put by!
There is love that refuses to die!
And the old sea this burden croons over
Forever, over and over!

GOLDEN DAISIES.

Disk of bronze and ray of gold
  Glimmering through the meadow grasses,
Burn less proudly! for, behold,
  Down the field my princess passes.
Hardly should I hold you fair —
  Golden, gay, midsummer daisies,
But for her, the maiden rare,
  Who, amid your starry mazes,
  Makes you splendid with her praises.

Soft brown tresses, eyes of blue,
  Is a heart beneath you waking?
Maiden, here's a heart for you,
  Fain were worthier of your taking.
Golden daisies, you have met
  In a fairy ring around her —
Does she hear my footfall yet,
  Where, enchanted, you have bound her?
  Hold her charmed, till we have crowned her!

Softly, blossoms, while she stands
In the sunny stillness dreaming, —
Softly hither, to my hands —
Wreathe for her a circlet gleaming! —
Lights her face a shy, swift smile;
Flower-like head she slowly raises: —
Was her heart mine, all the while?
Blossoms, royal with her praises,
Crown my queen, ye golden daisies!

BARBERRYING.

YEARS ago, years ago,
Years that seem to me like days, —
Through the Indian summer haze,
Barberrying, barberrying,
I went once with sisters three;
Faith, and Hope, and Charity.

Country girls, neighbors mine,
From the red house by the mill;
Through the lane, across the hill,
Barberrying, barberrying,
Up the steep woods by the sea,
We went rambling pleasantly.

Winding on, climbing on,
Wandered Hope through brake and bush;
Faith's low singing charmed the hush;
Barberrying, barberrying,
Under oak and maple tree,
Still and sweet walked Charity.

Gay were Hope's starry eyes
As the sparkling Pleiads seven ;
Faith's were blue as bluest heaven ;
Barberrying, barberrying,
As we walked, I could not see
Downcast orbs of Charity.

Up the hill, far we strayed ;
Thickets of the red fruit glowed,
Veiling gracefully the road ;
Barberrying, barberrying,
Over loose walls clambered we,
Happy as we well could be.

Apron-full, baskets-full,
Gathered Charity and I ;
Faith and Hope went laughing by,
Barberrying, barberrying ;
While beneath a reddening tree,
We sat resting silently.

Golden-rod, asters dim,
Lit the steps of Faith and Hope
Up the pathless rocky slope ;
Barberrying, barberrying,
Glimpses of the far-off sea
Came to Charity and me.

Up the hill, o'er the hill,
Like two blown leaves of a flower,
Fluttered they, a light half hour,
Barberrying, barberrying :
Said I, " Climb life's hill with me ;
Climb and rest, sweet Charity ! "

Did they move, parted lips,
Red as ripest of our spoil ?
Since that day of mirth and toil,
Barberrying, barberrying,
Dearest of the sisters three,
Charity abides with me.

A GAMBREL ROOF.

How pleasant! This old house looks down
Upon a shady little town,
Whose great good luck has been to stay
Just outside of the modern way
    Of tiresome strut and show;
The elm-trees overhead have seen
Two hundred new-born summers green
Up to their tops for sunshine climb;
And, since the old colonial time,
    The road has wound just so;

This way through Salem Village; that,
Along the Plains (the place is flat,
And names itself so); toward the tide
Of sea-fed creeks, past Ryal-Side,
    And round by Folly Hill,
Whose sunken cellar now is all
Memorial of a stately hall
Where yule-logs roared and red wine flowed;
From its lost garden to the road
    A gold bloom trickles still:

Woad-waxen gold — a foreign weed,
Spoiling the fields for useful seed,
Yet something to recall the day
When we were under royal sway,
And paid our taxes well.
And from that memory, as a thread,
The shuttle of my rhyme is fed;
Upon this ancient gambrel roof
The warp was spun; behold the woof,
And all there is to tell.

About a hundred years ago,
When Danvers roadsides were aglow
With cardinal flowers and golden-rod, —
Months ere in Lexington the sod
Was dewed with soldiers' blood;
Though warlike rumors filled the air,
And red coats loitered here-and-there,
Eye-sores to every yeoman free, —
When from the White Hills to the sea
Swelled Revolution's bud;

In this old house, even then not new,
A Continental Colonel true
Dwelt, with a blithe and wilful wife,
The sparkle on his cup of life;
A man of sober mood,

He felt the strife before it came,
Within him, like a welding flame,
That nerve and sinew changed to steel;
And, at the opening cannon peal,
Ready for fight he stood.

Cheap was the draught, beyond a doubt,
The mother country served us out;
And many a housewife raised a wail,
Hearing of fragrant chest and bale
To thirstless mermaids poured.
And Mistress Audrey's case was hard,
When her tall Colonel down the yard
Called, "Wife, be sure you drink no tea!"
For best Imperial, prime Bohea,
Were in her cupboard stored;

Young Hyson, too, the finest brand;
And here the good wife made a stand:
"Now, Colonel, well enough you know
Our tea was paid for long ago,
Before this cargo came,
With threepence duty on the pound;
It won't be wasted, I 'll be bound!
I 've asked a friend or two to sup,
And not to offer them a cup
Would be a stingy shame."

Into his face the quick blood flew:
"Wife, I have promised, so must you,
None shall drink tea inside my house;
Your gossips elsewhere must carouse:" —
The lady curtsied low:
"Husband, your word is law," she said;
But archly turned her well-set head
With roguish poise toward this old roof,
Soon as she heard his martial hoof
Along the highway go.

"Late dusk will fall ere he comes back:
Quick, Dill!" Whereat a figure black,
A strange, grotesque, swift shadow made
Between the silent elm-trees' shade,
Where all was grass and sun:
Then maid and mistress passed within
The pantry, hung with glittering tin,
Tiptoeing every sanded floor,
Till, at the china-closet door,
They saw their work begun.

The egg-shell porcelain, crystal-fine,
Was polished to its utmost shine;
The silver teaspoons gleamed as bright,
Upon the damask napkin white;
And many a knowing smile,

Flashed from the fair face to the black,
Across the kitchen chimney-back.
While syllabubs and custards grew
To comely shape betwixt the two,
And cakes, a toothsome pile.

But lightly dined the dame that day;
Her guests, in Sunday-best array,
Came, and not one arrived too soon,
In the first slant of afternoon;
An hour or two they sat,
In the low-studded western room,
Where hollyhocks threw rosy bloom
On sampler framed, and quaint Dutch tile;
They knit; they sewed long seams; the while
Chatting of this and that;—

Of horrors scarcely died away
From memory of the heads grown gray
On neighboring farms; how wizard John
And Indian Tituba went on,
When sorcerers were believed;
How Parson Parris tried to make
Poor Mary Sibley's conjuring cake
The leaven of that black witchcraft curse,
That grew and spread, from bad to worse,
And even the elect deceived;

Of apparitions at Cape Ann,
And spectral fights — the story ran;
Of pirate gold in Saugus' caves;
Sea-serpents off Nahant, the waves
    Lashing with fearsome trail;
Of armies flashing in the air
Auroral swords; prefiguring there
Some dreadful conflict, bloodshed, death: —
And needles stopped, and well-nigh breath,
    As eerier grew the tale.

Dame Audrey said: "The sun gets low;
Good neighbors mine, before you go,
Come to the house-top, pray, with me!
A goodly prospect you shall see,
    I promise, spread around.
If we must part ere day decline,
And if no hospitable sign
Appear, of China's cheering drink,
Not niggardly your hostess think!
    We all are patriots sound."

They followed her with puzzled air;
But saw, upon the topmost stair,
Out on the railed roof, dark-faced Dill
Guarding the supper-board, as still
    As solid ebony.

"A goodly prospect, as I said,
You here may see before you spread:
Upon a house is not *within* it;
But now we must not waste a minute;
Neighbors, sit down to tea!"

How Madam then her ruse explained,
What mirth arose as sunset waned,
In the close covert of these trees,
No leaf told the reporter breeze;
But when the twilight fell,
And hoof-beats rang down Salem road,
And up the yard the Colonel strode,
No soul beside the dame and Dill
Stirred in the mansion dim and still;
The game was played out well.

Let whoso chooses settle blame
Betwixt the Colonel and his dame,
Or dame and country. That the view
Is from this housetop fine, is true,
And needs but visual proof:
And if a woman's will found way
Years since, up here, its pranks to play,
Under Mansards the sport goes on.—
Moral of all here said or done:
I like a gambrel roof.

GOODY GRUNSELL'S HOUSE.

A WEARY old face, beneath a black mutch ;
  Like a flame in a cavern her eye,
  Betwixt craggy forehead and cheek-bone high ;
Her long, lean fingers hurried to clutch
A something concealed in her rusty cloak,
As a step on the turf the stillness broke ;
  While a sound — was it curse or sigh ? —
  Smote the ear of the passer-by.

A dreary old house, on a headland slope,
  Against the gray of the sea.
  Where garden and orchard used to be,
Witch-grass and nettle and rag-weed grope, —
Paupers that eat the earth's riches out, —
Nightshade and henbane are lurking about,
  Like demons that enter in
  When a soul has run waste to sin.

The house looked wretched and woe-begone ;
  Its desolate windows wept

With a dew that forever dripped and crept
From the moss-grown eaves; and ever anon
Some idle wind, with a passing slap,
Made rickety shutter or shingle flap
As who with a jeer should say,
"Why does the old crone stay?"

Goody Grunsell's house — it was all her own;
There was no one living to chide,
Though she tore every rib from its skeleton side
To kindle a fire when she sat alone
With the ghosts that had leave to go out and in,
Through crevice and rent, to the endless din
Of winds that muttered and moaned,
Of waves that wild ditties droned. —

And this was the only booty she hid
Under her threadbare cloak, —
A strip of worn and weather-stained oak:
Then in to her lonesome hearth she slid:
And, inch by inch, as the cold years sped,
She was burning the old house over her head;
Why not — when each separate room
Held more than a lifetime's gloom?

Goody Grunsell's house — not a memory glad
Illumined bare ceiling or wall;

But cruel shadows would sometimes fall
On the floor; and faces eerie and sad
At dusk would peer in at the broken pane,
While ghostly steps pattered through the rain,
  Sending the blood with a start
  To her empty, shriveled heart.

For she had not been a forbearing wife,
  Nor a loyal husband's mate;
The twain had been one but in fear and hate;
And the horror of that inverted life
Had not spent itself on their souls alone:
From the bitter root evil buds had blown;
  There were births that blighted grew,
  And died, — and no gladness knew.

The house unto nobody home had been,
  But a lair of pain and shame:
Could any its withered mistress blame,
Who sought from its embers a spark to win,
A warmth for the body, to soul refused?
Such questioning ran through her thoughts confused,
  As she slipped with her spoil from sight. —
  Could the dead assert their right?

The splintered board, like a dagger's blade,
  Goody Grunsell cowering hid,

As if the house had a voice that chid,
When wound after wound in its side she made;
As if the wraiths of her children cried
From their graves, to denounce her a homicide;
While the sea, up the weedy path,
Groaned, spuming in wordless wrath.

The house, with its pitiful, haunted look, —
Old Goody, more piteous still,
Angry and sad, as the night fell chill, —
They are pictures out of a long-lost book: —
But the windows of many a human face
Show tenants that burn their own dwelling-place;
And spectre and fiend will roam
Through the heart which is not love's home.

THE FOG-BELL.

The vessels are sunk in the mist;
And hist!
Through the veil of the air
Throbs a sound,
Like a wail of despair,
That dies into stillness profound.

All muffled in gray is the sea;
Not a tree
Sees its neighbor beside
Or before;
And across the blank tide,
Hark! that sob of an echo once more!

'T is the fog-bell's imploring, wild knell!
It is well
For the sailors who hear;
But its toll
Thrills the night with a fear —
To what doom drifts the rudderless soul!

OLD MADELINE.

OVER a crumpled paper in her hand
Old Madeline wept.
Dimly the candle flickered on the stand ;
Up the dark chimney flared a smouldering brand;
The whole house slept.

And Madeline's care had made that sleeping sweet;
For all day long
She pattered to and fro with light, quick feet ;
And while her broom made nook and corner neat
She hummed a song:

A broken singing, thin and pitiful, —
And yet in tune
With all that makes great lyrics musical.
It stopped the children, hurrying out of school,
At night or noon.

Now a quaint hymn ; now "Jamie on the sea ;"
An anthem snatch

That sung in far Thanksgivings used to be,
In savage days before the land was free;
A glee or catch;

No matter what — the children gathered near,
For all and each: —
Pathos of moaning winds through branches sere, —
Mirth as of waves that break in sunset clear
On some lone beach.

To-night she sat in silence. Every night,
For years and years,
Here had she cowered by the late candle-light
Over the worn-out print, and blurred her sight,
Reading through tears.

To one name, written on the list of "Dead,"
Her tired eyes grew.
Fallen in the march, pursuing foes that fled,
Somewhere beside the road he lay, they said;
His grave none knew.

The tattered newspaper spread out to her
A picture wide.
Among vast alien hills the battle's stir;
A death-bed where none came to minister
To him who died.

A spot of green beside a mountain road,
By warm winds kissed,
Where strange large roses opened hearts that glowed,
And over him their blood-red petals strewed
Whom love had missed.

For sweet maid Madeline had never guessed
Ralph cared for her
Save as a friend; while vainly he sought rest,
Sure that no tender feeling in her breast
For him would stir.

And still his image buried she within,
Beneath her thought,
Wondering what happier girl his heart would win.
She drowned her vexing dreams in work-day din;
The war he sought.

And after he had fallen, a comrade came,
And told her how
Upon the battle-eve he breathed her name:
Then Madeline said: "None else my hand shall claim,"—
And kept her vow.

With her no lightest wooing ever sped.
No man might press

A soothing hand upon her weary head,
Or whisper comfort to the heart that bled
With loneliness.

For Madeline said: "Ralph surely waits for me
Beyond Death's gate;
And I might miss him through eternity,
By joining fates with one less loved than he:
I too can wait.

"I could not bear another lover's kiss,
Because I feel
That somewhere, from the heights of heavenly bliss
His spirit hither yearns, as mine to his,
Forever leal."

This to her silent heart alone she said,
Hushing its moan,
That yet into her merriest singing strayed;
While all declared, "A cheerfuler old maid
Was never known."

Nor ever was there. As her poor song worth
And witchery stole
From muffled minors, in them had its birth,
Out of crushed joy sprang kindliness and mirth;
Her life was whole:—

Whole, though it seemed a fragment, rent apart
From its true end.
Downward from deathless clinging reached her heart,
Readier to comfort for its hidden smart;
To all a friend.

None saw her tears save God and her lost love:
Surely that dew
Kept memory blossoming fresh in fields above;
Against death's bars he must have felt the dove
That fluttering flew.

So lived she faithful, an unwedded bride.
His hand of snow
Age laid in blessing on her head. She died.
Do Ralph and Madeline now walk side by side?
The angels know.

THEY SAID.

THEY said of her, "She never can have felt
The sorrows that our deeper natures feel:"
They said, "Her placid lips have never spelt
Hard lessons taught by Pain: her eyes reveal
No passionate yearning, no perplexed appeal
To other eyes. Life and her heart have dealt
With her but lightly." — When the Pilgrims dwelt
First on these shores, lest savage hands should steal
To precious graves with desecrating tread,
The burial-field was with the ploughshare crossed,
And there the maize her silken tresses tossed.
With thanks those Pilgrims ate their bitter bread,
While peaceful harvests hid what they had lost.
— What if her smiles concealed from you her dead?

GOLDEN-ROD.

MIDSUMMER music in the grass —
  The cricket and the grasshopper;
White daisies and red clover pass;
  The caterpillar trails her fur
After the languid butterfly;
  But green and spring-like is the sod
Where autumn's earliest lamps I spy —
  The tapers of the golden-rod.

This flower is fuller of the sun
  Than any our pale North can show;
It has the heart of August won,
  And scatters wide the warmth and glow
Kindled at summer's mid-noon blaze,
  Where gentians of September bloom
Along October's leaf-strewn ways,
  And through November's paths of gloom.

As lavish of its golden light
  As sunshine's self, this blossom is;

Its starry chandeliers burn bright
All day ; and have you noted this —
A perfect sun in every flower ?
Ten thousand thousand fairy suns,
Raying from new disks hour by hour,
As up the stalk the life-flash runs ?

" A worthless plant — a flaunting weed !
Abundant splendors are too cheap."
Neighbor, not so ! unless, indeed,
You would from heaven the sunsets sweep,
And count as mean the common day :
Meseems the world has not so much
Superfluous beauty, that we may
Blight anything with scornful touch.

In times long past, the harebell's grace
I blent with this resplendent spray ;
And one I loved would lean her face
Toward their contrasted hues, and say,
" The sun-like gold, the heavenly blue,
I know not which delights me most," —
Sacred are both, dear heart, to you :
They lit your feet from earth's dim coast.

The swinging harebell faintly tolled
Upon the still autumnal air ;

The golden-rod bent down to hold
  Her rows of funeral-torches there.
All blossoms, sweet! to you were dear;
  No homeliest weed you counted vile:
The flower I choose, of all the year,
  Is this, that last beheld your smile.

Herald of autumn's reign, it sets
  Gay bonfires blazing round the fields:
Rich autumn pays in gold his debts
  For tenancy that summer yields.
Beauty's slow harvest now comes in;
  New promise with fulfilment won:
The heart's vast hope does but begin,
  Filled with ripe seeds of sweetness gone.

Because its myriad glimmering plumes
  Like a great army's stir and wave;
Because its gold in billows blooms,
  The poor man's barren walks to lave;
Because its sun-shaped blossoms show
  How souls receive the light of God,
And unto earth give back that glow —
  I thank Him for the golden-rod.

AT HER BEDSIDE.

Fly, little bird, fly
  Close to the sick woman's bed!
Tell her of streams running by,
  Of branches that wave overhead:
When shut is the weary one's eye,
  Wake her soul to your music, instead!

Sing, little bird, sing
  Through the thin cloud of her dreams!
Breezes and wild-flowers bring,
  Till the heart of the slumberer seems
To the beautiful woods taking wing, —
  To the glen where the rivulet gleams.

Wait, little bird, wait
  Till her sorrowful burden of pain
Is buried at sleep's summer gate: —
  Unwind from the quiet some strain,
A lovely new world to create;
  Then sing her to health again!

OVER THE HILL.

THERE 's a face I must ever remember,
  Though I may not behold it again
Through the golden haze of September,
  Or the dreary November rain,—
A face that was joyous and tender
As the sea in its summer splendor,
  And a smile that was clear and still
  As the sunrise over the hill.

There were footsteps that flew to meet me,
  Crushing the moss and the fern;
There were eyes that brightened to greet me,
  When others were cold and stern.
We crossed, in the sunny weather,
The blossoming fields together,
  And rested beside the rill,
  Coming over the hill.

Now the hill is barren and lonely,
  And the sea is moaning beyond,

And the bleak, bleak winds answer only
To my heart's cry, wild and fond.
Pale asters, with dew-drops laden,
Do you weep for the blue-eyed maiden
Who sleeps in the graveyard chill,—
In the graveyard over the hill?

No longer the sea wears the glory
That lighted its billows of old:
The moss and the fern heard a story
That never again can be told.
But I only seem to outlive her:
Green heights lie beyond the dark river;
There my soul to her step will thrill,
Coming over the hill.

WORKMATES.

FACE and figure of a maiden,
  Set in memory's antique gold:
In the eyelids' droop, thought-laden,
  In the dark hair's shining fold
Over the wide, blue-veined brow,
One I love is with me now.

Side by side we work together,
  'Mid the whirring of the wheels;
Side by side we wonder whether
  Each the other's longing feels
To throw open her heart's door,
With a "Welcome, evermore!"

Suddenly the seals are broken:
  How it came, we cannot tell, —
Eyes have met, and lips have spoken:
  We have known each other well,
Ages since, in some fair earth,
Playmates ere our mortal birth.

Noisy wheels break into singing,
  Bird-like thoughts with thoughts ascend,
Into the free air upspringing:
  Oh the sweetness of a friend!
What if earth is cold and wide?
Here we two are, side by side.

Out into the summer gazing
  From the windows of the mill, —
Running river — cattle grazing —
  White clouds on the dark-blue hill, —
Did we murmur then, shut in
With a hundred girls, to spin?

No: for discontent were treason,
  When the breath of all the flowers,
And the soul of the bright season
  Entering, made their gladness ours:
Of the summer we were part;
Nature gave us her whole heart.

When the slow day dragged, we chanted,
  Each to each, some holy hymn,
Till the sunset toward us slanted
  As in old cathedrals dim,
Or a cloistered forest-aisle,
Wakening in us smile for smile.

Daily bread our hands were winning, —
  Winning more than bread alone ;
Unseen fingers, with us spinning,
  Twined all life into our own, —
Knit our being's fibres fast
Into unknown futures vast.

And we touched the flying spindles,
  As if so we struck a note
Unto which the whole world kindles ; —
  Tidal harmonies, that float
Into chords on earth unheard —
Mystic chant of Work and Word.

Work ! it thrilled new meanings through us
  From creation's undersong ;
Unto all great souls it drew us,
  Men heroic, angels strong :
Firm our little thread spun we
For the web of Destiny.

Time has led us onward slowly,
  O my low-browed maiden dear,
Into duties new and holy,
  Widening labors, year by year :
Good it is for us, in sooth,
That we bore the yoke in youth.

Good it is in the beginning,
  Toil for our true friend to know,
Place in God's grand purpose winning,—
  Deep into His life to grow,
Saying by our work, as He,
Unto light and order, "Be!"

Good and sweet the friendship given
  To our girlish working-days,—
Bond that death must leave unriven:
  While we walk in parted ways,
Close the thought of you I hold,
Set in memory's antique gold.

THE WATER-LILY.

FROM the reek of the pond, the lily
  Has risen, in raiment white, —
A spirit of air and water, —
  A form of incarnate light.
    Yet, except for the rooted stem
    That steadies her diadem, —
Except for the earth she is nourished by,
Could the soul of the lily have climbed to the sky?

MY MERRIMACK.

DEAR river, that didst wander through
My childhood's path, a vein of blue,
Freshening the pulses of my youth
Toward glimpsing hope and opening truth,
A heart thank-laden hastens back
To rest by thee, bright Merrimack!

From hills with sunlit mists aflame,
Down over rocky rapids came,
Breaking in wonder on my sight,
The living water, glad as light.
A child, strayed inland from the sea,
The Merrimack adopted me.

Hemlock and pine inwove their spell
Around my thoughts: the forest-smell
Of moss and fern was incense sweet:
A miracle that stayed my feet —
A blossom-revelation new
Sprang from thy side — the harebell blue!

Days thickened with the dust of toil;
My paradise could no man spoil.
A presence by my window played;
A dimpling, glancing light and shade:
Whatever sweetness found an end,
The river was my constant friend.

Though dew from the Franconia hills
Into thy crystal cup distills;
Though Winnepesaukee's ripples bright,
And Pemigewasset's placid light, —
Music of waterfall and brook
Are in thy voice, and in thy look:

Dearer companionship than thine,
Friends who have made earth half-divine,
Voices that blend with thy wild birds
And woodland flower, their loving words, —
Heart-shelter that is holy ground,
Beside thy waters have I found.

River of inspirations sweet,
Wash off the dust from weary feet!
Where shuttles clash and spindles whirl,
Sing to the homesick working-girl
In cheerful undertones, and lift
Her thoughts along thy current swift!

The joy that thou hast been to me,
To all thy bordering toilers be!
Broaden in friendship, bloom with friends,
Until thy mountain-freshness spends
Itself adown thy seaward track,—
My beautiful blue Merrimack!

THE FIELD-SPARROW.

A BUBBLE of music floats
  The slope of the hill-side over, —
A little wandering sparrow's notes, —
  And the bloom of yarrow and clover,
And the smell of sweet-fern and the bayberry leaf
  On his ripple of song are stealing;
For he is a chartered thief,
  The wealth of the fields revealing.

One syllable, clear and soft
  As a rain-drop's silvery patter,
Or a tinkling fairy-bell, heard aloft,
  In the midst of the merry chatter
Of robin and linnet and wren and jay, —
  One syllable, oft repeated:
He has but a word to say,
  And of that he will not be cheated.

The singer I have not seen;
  But the song I arise and follow

The brown hills over, the pastures green,
And into the sunlit hollow.
With a joy that his life unto mine has lent,
I can feel my glad eyes glisten,
Though he hides in his happy tent,
While I stand outside and listen.

This way would I also sing,
My dear little hill-side neighbor!
A tender carol of peace to bring
To the sun-burnt fields of labor,
Is better than making a loud ado;
Trill on, amid clover and yarrow, —
There 's a heart-beat echoing you,
And blessing you, blithe little sparrow!

OCTOBER.

SEPTEMBER days were green and fair;
But sharp winds pierced the shining air,
That froze the dimples of the river,
And made the wayside blossom shiver.

September's heart was winter-steeled;
The frost lay white upon the field,
Day after day: the northern blast
Withered the bracken as it passed.

"The time of snow!" we said. Not yet!
Flushed with suffusions of regret,
Out of the south October came,
Setting the forest's heart aflame.

Summer returned with her, and still
She lingers with us: stream and hill
And wide fields waver like a dream
Through warm, soft mist, and tender gleam.

Again the gentian dares unfold
Blue fringes closed against the cold;
Again, in mossy solitudes,
The glimmering aster lights the woods.

One mass of sunshine, glows the beech;
Great oaks, in scarlet drapery, reach
Across the crimson blackberry vine,
Toward purple ash and sombre pine,

The orange-tinted sassafras
With quaintest foliage strews the grass;
Witch-hazel shakes her gold curls out,
'Mid the red maple's flying rout.

Our forests, that so lately stood
Like any green familiar wood,
Aladdin's fabulous tale repeat, —
The trees drop jewels at our feet.

With every day, some splendor strange!
With every hour some subtle change!
Of our plain world how could we guess
Such miracles of loveliness?

Ah, let the green Septembers go!
They promise more than they bestow;

But now the earth around us seems
Clad in the radiance of our dreams.

Omen of joy to thee and me,
Dear friend, may this rare season be!
Life has not had its perfect test;
Our latest years may be our best.

Heaven's inmost warmth may wait us still.
What if, beyond time's autumn-chill
There bless us, ere we hence depart,
A glad October of the heart!

WHEN THE WOODS TURN BROWN.

How will it be when the roses fade
Out of the garden and out of the glade?
When the fresh pink bloom of the sweet-brier wild,
That leans from the dell like the cheek of a child,
Is changed for dry hips on a thorny bush?
Then scarlet and carmine the groves will flush.

How will it be when the autumn flowers
Wither away from their leafless bowers;
When sun-flower and star-flower and golden-rod
Glimmer no more from the frosted sod,
And the hill-side nooks are empty and cold?
Then the forest-tops will be gay with gold.

How will it be when the woods turn brown,
Their gold and their crimson all dropped down,
And crumbled to dust? Oh then, as we lay
Our ear to earth's lips, we shall hear her say,
"In the dark, I am seeking new gems for my crown"—
We will dream of green leaves, when the woods turn brown.

NOVEMBER.

WHO said November's face was grim?
Who said her voice was harsh and sad?
I heard her sing in wood paths dim,
I met her on the shore, so glad,
So smiling, I could kiss her feet!
There never was a month so sweet.

October's splendid robes, that hid
The beauty of the white-limbed trees,
Have dropped in tatters; yet amid
Those perfect forms the gazer sees
A proud wood-monarch here and there
Garments of wine-dipped crimson wear.

In precious flakes the autumnal gold
Is clinging to the forest's fringe:
Yon bare twig to the sun will hold
Each separate leaf, to show the tinge
Of glorious rose-light reddening through
Its jewels, beautiful as few.

Where short-lived wild-flowers bloomed and died
  The slanting sunbeams fall across
Vine-broideries, woven from side to side
  Above mosaics of tinted moss.
So does the Eternal Artist's skill
Hide beauty under beauty still.

And, if no note of bee or bird
  Through the rapt stillness of the woods
Or the sea's murmurous trance be heard,
  A Presence in these solitudes
Upon the spirit seems to press
The dew of God's dear silences.

And if, out of some inner heaven,
  With soft relenting comes a day
Whereto the heart of June is given, —
  All subtle scents and spicery
Through forest crypts and arches steal,
With power unnumbered hurts to heal.

Through yonder rended veil of green,
  That used to shut the sky from me,
New glimpses of vast blue are seen ;
  I never guessed that so much sea
Bordered my little plot of ground,
And held me clasped so close around.

This is the month of sunrise skies
  Intense with molten mist and flame;
Out of the purple deeps arise
  Colors no painter yet could name:
Gold-lilies and the cardinal-flower
Were pale, against this gorgeous hour.

Still lovelier when athwart the east
  The level beam of sunset falls;
The tints of wild-flowers long deceased
  Glow then upon the horizon walls;
Shades of the rose and violet
Close to their dear world lingering yet.

What idleness, to moan and fret
  For any season fair, gone by!
Life's secret is not guessed at yet;
  Veil under veil its wonders lie.
Through grief and loss made glorious,
The soul of past joy lives in us.

More welcome than voluptuous gales
  This keen, crisp air, as conscience clear:
November breathes no flattering tales, —
  The plain truth-teller of the year;
Who wins her heart, and he alone,
Knows she has sweetness all her own.

A WHITE WORLD.

I NEVER knew the world in white
So beautiful could be
As I have seen it here to-day,
Beside the wintry sea;
A new earth, bride of a new heaven,
Has been revealed to me.

The sunrise blended wave and cloud
In one broad flood of gold,
But touched with rose the world's white robes
In every curve and fold;
While the blue air did over all
Its breath in wonder hold.

Earth was a statue half awake
Beneath her Sculptor's hand:
How the Great Master bends with love
Above the work He planned,
Easy it is, on such a day,
To feel and understand.

The virgin-birth of Bethlehem,
That snow-pure infancy,
Warm with the rose-bloom of the skies,—
Life's holiest mystery,
God's utter tenderness to man,
Seems written on all I see.

For earth, this vast humanity,
The Lord's own body is;
This life of ours He entereth in,
Shares all its destinies;
And we shall put His whiteness on
When we are wholly His.

And so the day dies like a dream,
A prophecy divine:
Dear Master, through us perfectly
Shape Thou Thy white design,
Nor let one life be left a blot
On this fair world of Thine!

BEVERLY FARMS,
January 1, 1873.

SNOW-BLOOM.

WHERE does the snow go,
So white on the ground?
Under May's azure
No flake can be found.
Look into the lily
Some sweet summer hour;
There blooms the snow
In the heart of the flower.

Where does the love go,
Frozen to grief?
Along the heart's fibres
Its cold thrill is brief.
The snow-fall of sorrow
Turns not to dry dust;
It lives in white blossoms
Of patience and trust.

BETWEEN WINTER AND SPRING.

THAT weary time that comes between
The last snow and the earliest green!
One barren clod the wide fields lie,
And all our comfort is the sky.

We know the sap is in the tree, —
That life at buried roots must be;
Yet dreary is the earth we tread,
As if her very soul were dead.

Before the dawn the darkest hour!
The blank and chill before the flower!
Beauty prepares this background gray
Whereon her loveliest tints to lay.

Ah, patience! ere we dream of it,
Spring's fair new gospel will be writ.
Look up! good only can befall,
While heaven is at the heart of all!

FRIEND BROOK.

THOU hastenest down between the hills to meet me
at the road,
The secret scarcely lisping, of thy beautiful abode
Among the pines and mosses of yonder shadowy
height,
Where thou dost sparkle into song, and fill the
woods with light.

The traveller crossing the rude bridge, dear Brook,
would never guess,
From thy staid movement through the fields, thy
mountain loveliness;
Thou wanderest among weeds and grain in common-
place disguise,
Most happy to evade the glance of undiscerning
eyes.

But I have heard thee whispering, "Call me by
name, 'Friend Brook,'
For that I am to thee; come up to my remotest
nook,

And I will give thee freedom of the hospitable hills,
And pour my freshness through thy life, from clouds and springs and rills."

O happy soul! thy song is sweet upon the mountain-side;
The trees bend over thee, in league to stay thy downward tide;
The wild arbutus, flushed with haste, trails close to make appeal
For brief delay, and after her the wet-eyed violets steal.

But not the white wake-robin, nor the star-flower on thy brink,
Nor any forest shrub whose roots from thee refreshment drink,
Can need thee with my need, Friend Brook; and never any bird
Can trill such gratitude to thee as my heart chants unheard.

No; not the wood-thrush singing in the pine-trees' twilight shade,
As if one half his melody the boughs' low murmur made, —

A love-song eloquent with breaks of speechless tenderness,
A music heard through thy soft rush, too sweet to tell or guess.

For thou respondest humanly, almost, to human thought,
Soothing the silent pain wherewith a stranger meddleth not;
Healing sick fancies from thy clear life's overflowing cup,
And winning flagging foot and heart forever up and up.

Friend Brook, I hold thee dearest yet for what I do not know
Of thy pure secret springs afar, the mystery of thy flow
Out of the mountain caverns, hid by tangled brier and fern;
A friend is most a friend of whom the best remains to learn.

New-born each moment, flashing light through worn, accustomed ways,
With gentle hindrance, gay surprise, sweet hurryings and delays;

Spirit that issuest forth from wells of life unguessed,
unseen,
A revelation thou of all that holiest friendships
mean!

I will not name the hills that meet to hold thee hand
in hand,
The summits leaning toward thy voice, the mount-
ain, lone and grand,
That looks across to welcome thee into the open
light;
Be hidden, O my brook, from all save love's anointed
sight!

Yet I am glad that every year, and all the summer
long,
Some wayfarers will seek thy side, and listen to thy
song,
And feel their hearts bound on with thine over the
rocks of care;
With such as these, through shade and shine, thy
friendship will I share.

And out of their abounding joy new loveliness and
grace
Will grow into the memory of thy green abiding-
place.

Thou veilest thyself in sun-touched mists through
which I may not look,
Yet blends my being with thy flow, in stir and rest,
Friend Brook!

ONE BUTTERFLY.

A PURPLE stretch of mountains,
  And, them and me between,
A bed of sweet, red clover,
  Billows of meadowy green.
Across the wind-swept pastures
  One snow-white butterfly
Sails toward the grand horizon,
  Sole voyager of the sky.

The delicate cloud-shadows
  Win from the mountain-sides
Glimpses of shy, strange color,
  That common sunshine hides.
To read that revelation
  There 's none save thou and I,
In all this noon-lit silence,
  My white-winged butterfly.

Is it a waste of beauty,
  That only we behold

Those emerald hues ethereal,
  Wavering through pearl and gold?
My heart aches with the wonder
  Of all the unrolling sky,
The new, immense horizons,
  My lonely butterfly!

WHITE EVERLASTING FLOWERS.

THAT morning on the mountain-top!
Could the day's chariot wheel but stop,
And leave us in this trance of light
Upon our autumn-crimsoned height,—
Summit of lifted solitudes,
Where but the hermit breeze intrudes;
With one blue river glimpsed in sheen
Along the valley's perfect green;
With lakes that open limpid eyes
Unto the old heavens' new surprise;
And over all, a purple range
Of hills, that glow and pale, and change
To pearl and turquoise, rose and snow,
As cloud processions past them go,
On unknown errands of the air.

"Yes! earth to-day in heaven hath share!"
We told each other in our thought,
Though in that high hush lips moved not.
If that were only Bearcamp stream
That lit the vale with sinuous gleam;

If mountains that in opal shone
By common, rustic names were known, —
Old Israel, Hunchback, and the rest,
In floods of beauty they lay blest;
And bathed in the same bliss were we,
On the pine-crest of Ossipee.

"Earth is not mere hard earth," we said,
"A place of toil for daily bread,
A clod to cover us at last,
When struggle and defeat are past;
But heaven is hid therein alway, —
The gem's clear essence in dull clay;
And by celestial visionings
Alone we read the truth of things.
Since life puts off her rough disguise
As into purer air we rise,
Why should we leave our hard-won peak,
The lowland commonplace to seek?
Here, with transfiguring rapture thrilled,
Here let us tabernacles build!"

What was it stopped our musing talk?
White blossoms scattered on a rock, —
White everlasting flowers, that grow
Where bleakest north winds beat and blow, —
New England's amaranth. Some tired hand

Had dropped them, or, in visions grand
As ours, had let them slip, forgot,
The text of our bewildered thought
Left to illumine and explain;
Pathetic flowers, that might have lain
Days, months, in their torn raiment white,
Undying children of the light,
By whoso sought them, scorned, thrown by,
Rapt with these mountain splendors high.

Climb for the white flower of thy dream,
O pilgrim! let the vision gleam
As hope and possibility,
Down the low level that must be
Thy usual path; but do not stay,
Enamored of supernal day,
While thy benighted comrades grope
In shadows on the dangerous slope!
Its light in eye and heart shall be
A signal betwixt them and thee
Of joy to wait for and desire,
While faith can glow, or souls aspire.

Yet hold fast something to recall
The glory that envelops all
The meanest dust that round us lies, —
Some glimpse of near eternities, —

Though but one everlasting flower,
Memory of one immortal hour:
For waif more saddening none may find
Than amaranth plucked, and left behind.

WEST OSSIPEE, N. H.,
September, 1875.

ON THE LEDGE.

RESTORED unto life by the sun and the breeze!
Rich balsams float down from the resinous trees,
Stirring into quick health every pulse of the air:
Released once again from imprisoning care,
At the gate of green pastures my soul lieth free,
And to go in or out is refreshment to me.

Lo, yonder is Paradise! Softly below,
The river that watereth Eden doth flow!
I behold, through blue gaps in the mountainous West,
Height ascending on height, the abodes of the blest:
And I cannot tell whether to climb were more sweet
Than to lap me in beauty spread out at my feet.

There sways a white cloud on yon loftiest peak;
A wind from beyond it is fanning my cheek;
Through the oak and the birch glides a musical shiver;
A ripple just silvers the dusk of the river.

— Though I may not know how, each is part of the whole
Perfect flood-tide of peace that is brimming my soul.

Here is shelter and outlook, deep rest and wide room;
The pine woods behind, breathing balm out of gloom;
Before, the great hills over vast levels lean, —
A glory of purple, a splendor of green.
As a new earth and heaven, ye are mine once again,
Ye beautiful meadows and mountains of Maine!

BETHEL, Maine,
September, 1879.

UP THE ANDROSCOGGIN.

SHINING along its windings
I behold the river rush,
Hinting of lakes deep hidden
In a far-off mountain hush.
It flashes their mystery hither;
It carries it onward — whither?
Like the ocean-moan in the heart of a shell,
I hear that steady monotone tell
How all great action reveals at length
Unguessed resources of lonely strength.

Swift traveller, hurrying river,
Whence hast thou come to-day?
From tenantless forests of Errol,
Green glooms of Magalloway;
White lilies, in careless order,
Thronged out through thy rippling border,
And the moss-hung limbs of the aged fir
Waved over thee weirdly, in farewell stir,
And the old cliff-eagle screamed after thee, —
Umbagog's wild nursling, escaped to the sea.

Where the foot-hills of Waumbek-Methna
Descend to the woodlands of Maine,
Down fliest thou, as unto thy kindred, —
A steed with a loosened rein.
No art may depict the fierce fashion,
The impulse, the plunge, and the passion
Of brown waters bounding through barriers strait,
To gaze on the solemn, crowned summits, that wait,
Advance, then recede into distances gray,
While, moaning and sobered, thou goest thy way.

Beyond are the fields of Bethel,
The meadows of perfect green,
Where, a fugitive weary and listless,
Thou sleepest in silvery sheen.
But lower and less are the mountains
That dip their rough feet in thy fountains,
And thy onward journey, thou wilderness stream,
Is as when one wakes from a morning dream
Unto daily labor, while earth and air
Grow dull with a tinge of pervading care.

Thy song rolled clear, Androscoggin!
Like the rune of a seer it ran:
The story and life of a river
Are the life and the story of man.

The resolve, the romantic endeavor,
The dream that fulfills itself never;
With freshness that urges, and full veins that boil,
Down the hill-sides of hope, over levels of toil,
Till the Will that moves under our purpose is done,
And the stream and the ocean have met, and are one!

BERLIN FALLS, N. H.,
September, 1878.

IN A CLOUD RIFT.

Upon our loftiest White Mountain peak,
  Filled with the freshness of untainted air,
We sat, nor cared to listen or to speak
  To one another, for the silence there
Was eloquent with God's presence. Not a sound
  Uttered the winds in their unhindered sweep
Above us through the heavens. The gulf profound,
  Below us, seethed with mists, a sullen deep:
From thawless ice-caves of a vast ravine
Rolled sheeted clouds across the lands unseen.

How far away seemed all that we had known
  In homely levels of the earth beneath,
Where still our thoughts went wandering! — "Turn
    thee!" Blown
  Apart before us, a dissolving wreath
Of cloud framed in a picture on the air:
  The fair long Saco Valley, whence we came;
The hills and lakes of Ossipee; and there
Glimmers the sea! Some pleasant, well-known
    name

With every break to memory hastens back,—
Monadnock — Winnepesaukee — Merrimack.

On widening vistas broader rifts unfold;
Far off into the waters of Champlain
Great sunset summits dip their flaming gold;
There winds the dim Connecticut, a vein
Of silver through aerial green; and here
The upland street of rural Bethlehem;
And there, the roofs of Bethel. Azure-clear
Shimmers the Androscoggin; like a gem
Umbagog glistens; and Katahdin gleams,—
Or is it some dim mountain of our dreams?

Our own familiar world, not yet half known,
Nor loved enough, in tints of Paradise
Lies there before us, now so lovely grown,
We wonder what strange film was on our eyes
Ere we climbed hither. But again the cloud,
Descending, shuts the beauteous vision out;
Between us the abysses spread their shroud;
We are to earth, as earth to us, a doubt.
Dear home folk, skyward seeking us, can see
No crest or crag where pilgrim feet may be.

Who whispered unto us of life and death
As silence closed upon our hearts once more?

On heights where angels sit, perhaps a breath
May clear the separating gulfs; a door
May open sometimes betwixt earth and heaven,
And life's most haunting mystery be shown
A fog-drift of the mind, scattered and driven
Before the winds of God; no vague unknown
Death's dreaded path, — only a curtained stair;
And heaven but earth raised into purer air.

MOUNTAINEER'S PRAYER.

GIRD me with the strength of Thy steadfast hills,
The speed of Thy streams give me!
In the spirit that calms, with the life that thrills,
I would stand or run for Thee.
Let me be Thy voice, or Thy silent power,
As the cataract, or the peak, —
An eternal thought, in my earthly hour,
Of the living God to speak!

Clothe me in the rose-tints of Thy skies,
Upon morning summits laid!
Robe me in the purple and gold that flies
Through Thy shuttles of light and shade!
Let me rise and rejoice in Thy smile aright,
As mountains and forests do!
Let me welcome Thy twilight and Thy night,
And wait for Thy dawn anew!

Give me of the brook's faith, joyously sung
Under clank of its icy chain!

Give me of the patience that hides among
Thy hill-tops, in mist and rain!
Lift me up from the clod, let me breathe Thy breath!
Thy beauty and strength give me!
Let me lose both the name and the meaning of death,
In the life that I share with Thee!

ASLEEP ON THE SUMMIT.

Upon the mountain's stormy breast
I laid me down and sank to rest;
I felt the wild thrill of the blast,
Defied and welcomed as it passed,
And made my lullaby the psalm
Of strife that wins immortal calm.

Cradled and rocked by wind and cloud,
Safe pillowed on the summit proud,
Steadied by that encircling arm
Which holds the universe from harm,
I knew the Lord my soul would keep,
Among His mountain-tops asleep.

Mount Washington, N. H.,
August, 1877.

SHARED.

I SAID it in the meadow-path,
  I say it on the mountain-stairs, —
The best things any mortal hath
  Are those which every mortal shares.

The air we breathe, the sky, the breeze,
  The light without us and within,
Life, with its unlocked treasuries,
  God's riches, are for all to win.

The grass is softer to my tread
  For rest it yields unnumbered feet;
Sweeter to me the wild-rose red
  Because she makes the whole world sweet.

Into your heavenly loneliness
  Ye welcomed me, O solemn peaks!
And me in every guest you bless
  Who reverently your mystery seeks.

And up the radiant peopled way
That opens into worlds unknown,
It will be life's delight to say
"Heaven is not heaven for me alone."

Rich by my brethren's poverty!
Such wealth were hideous! I am blest
Only in what they share with me,
In what I share with all the rest.

FROM THE HILLS.

FROM white brows flushed with heavenly morning-red,
From faces beautiful with prophecy
Of the sun-gospel a new day shall see,
From cloud-wrapt shape and light-anointed head,
Out of whose gracious mystery words are said
That wake abysmal voices, and set free
Reverberations of eternity,
Down to the level ocean are we sped,
Where broken tints in wide illusion blend,
And all sounds gather into monotone.
Always unto great seers have mountains shown
Their Founder and Uprearer as man's friend.
The hills are a religion; but the sea,
O Truth, is doubt's unanswered moan to thee!

A PASSING SAIL.

I WATCHED the white sails moving
On the summer sea:
One went bird-wise, wing and wing,
Fluttering joyously;
Ocean space she seemed to fill
With her graceful flight;
Fancy, spell-bound, followed her,
Till she was out of sight.

Behind her, one was dimly
Penciled on the mist;
If the sail-speck moved at all,
None, in passing, wist.
Yet was this an Indian bark
On her voyage of years;
And that, a pretty pleasure yacht,
An idling school-boy steers.

No argosy or frigate
Courtesies in wavelets light;

Ships that carry world-supplies
  Dare mid-ocean's might.
Trifler, haply freighted lives,
  Unadmired of thee,
Grander are than thy small guess,
  And farther out at sea.

BERMOOTHES.

UNDER the eaves of a Southern sky,
  Where the cloud roof bends to the ocean floor,
Hid in lonely seas, the Bermoothes lie, —
  An emerald cluster that Neptune bore
Away from the covetous earth-god's sight,
And placed in a setting of sapphire light.

Prospero's realm and Miranda's isles,
  Floating to music of Ariel
Upon fantasy's billow, that glows and smiles,
  Flushing response to the lovely spell;
Tremulous color and outline seem
Lucent as glassed in a life-like dream.

And away and afar, as in dreams we drift,
  Glimmer the blossoming orange groves;
And the dolphin tints of the water shift,
  And the angel-fish through the pure lymph moves
With the gleam of a rainbow; and soft clouds sweep
Over isle and wave like the wings of sleep.

Deepens the dream into memory now:—
The straight roads cut through the cedar hills,
The coral cliffs and the roofs of snow,
And the crested cardinal-bird, that trills
A carol clear as the ripple of red
He made in the air, as he flashed overhead.

Through pathways trodden of many feet
The gray little ground-dove flutters and cooes;
The bluebird is singing a ballad sweet
As ever was mingled with Northern dews;
And the boatswain-bird from the calm lagoon
Lifts his white length into cloudless noon.

Under this headland cliff as you row,
Follow its bastioned layers down
Into fathomless crystal, far below
Vision or ken: spite of old renown,
So massive a wall could Titan erect
As the little coralline architect?

Against the dusk arches of surf-worn caves
In a shimmer of beryl eddies the tide;
Or brightens to topaz where the waves,
Outlined in foam, on the reef subside;
Or shades into delicate opaline bands
Dreamily lapsing on pale pink sands.

See the banana's broad pennons, the wind
  Has torn into shreds in his tropical mood!
Look at the mighty old tamarind
  That bore fruit in Saladin's babyhood!
See the pomegranates begin to burn,
And the roses, roses, at every turn!

Into high calms of the sunny air
  The aloe climbs with her golden flower,
While sentinel yucca and prickly-pear
  With lance and with bayonet guard her bower;
And the life-leaf creeps by its fibred edge
To hang out gay bells from the jutting ledge.

A glory of oleander-bloom
  Borders and brightens the craggy roads;
From the dim spice-gardens a rare perfume
  The lingering cloud fleet heavily loads;
And over the beauty and over the balm
Rises the crown of the royal palm.

Far into the hill-sides caverns wind:
  Pillar and ceiling of stalactite
Mirrored in lakes the red torches find;
  Corridors zigzag from light to light;
And the long fern swings down the slippery stair
Over thresholds curtained with maiden-hair.

Outside, with a motion weirdly slow,
The mangrove walks through secluded coves,
Leaning on crutch-like boughs, that grow
Downward, and root into tangled groves,
Where, sheltered by jagged rock-shelves wide,
Eeriest sprites of the deep might hide.

Wherever you wander, the sea is in sight,
With its changeable turquois green and blue,
And its strange transparence of limpid light:
You can watch the work that the Nereids do,
Down, down, where their purple fans unfurl,
Planting their coral and sowing their pearl.

Who knows the spot where Atlantis sank?
Myths of a lovely drowned continent
Homeless drift over waters blank:
What if these reefs were her monument?
Isthmus and cavernous cape may be
Her mountain summits escaped from the sea.

Spirits alone in these islands dwelt
All the dumb, dim years ere Columbus sailed,
The old voyagers said; and it might be spelt
Into dream-books of legend, if wonders failed,
They were demons that shipwrecked Atlantis, affrayed
At the terror of silence themselves had made.

Whatever their burden, the winds have a sound
  As of muffled voices that, moaning, bewail
An unchronicled sorrow, around and around
  Whispering and hushing a half-told tale, —
A musical mystery, filling the air
With its endless pathos of vague despair.

And again into fantasy's billowy play
  Ripples memory back, with elusive change;
For chrysolite oceans, a blank of gray,
  Fringed with the films of a mirage strange, —
A shimmering blur of blossom and gleam;
Can it be Bermoothes? or is it a dream?

THE SUNSET-BIRD OF DOMINICA.[1]

DOMINICA's fire-cleft summits
  Rise from bluest of blue oceans;
Dominica's palms and plantains
  Feel the trade-wind's mighty motions
Swaying with impetuous stress
The West Indian wilderness.

Tree-ferns wave their fans majestic,
  Mangoes lift white-blossomed masses
Bright against the black abutments
  Of volcanic mountain-passes;
Carrying with them up the height
Many a gorgeous parasite.

[1] One of many new species of birds discovered in the Caribbean Islands by Mr. Frederick A. Ober, of Beverly, Massachusetts, and added to the collection in the Smithsonian Institution. The cry of this bird, just before nightfall, which sounds like the words "*Soleil coucher!*" was supposed by the Caribs to be the voice of a spirit; and they believed that whoever tried to follow it would be led into some dreadful calamity.

Dominica's crater-cauldron
  Seethes against its lava-beaches,
Boils in misty desolation;
  Seldom foot its border reaches, —
Seldom any traveller's eye
Penetrates its barriers high.

Over hidden precipices
  Falls the unseen torrent's thunder;
Windy shrieks and sibilations
  Fill the pathless gorge with wonder;
And the dusky Carib hears,
Cowering with mysterious fears.

"Hark!" The Northern hunter listens:
  Down the jungles of the highland
Steals a melody unearthly,
  Wavering over sea and island;
Can that tender music start
From the crater's hollow heart?

Floats the weird note onward, downward,
  Flute-like, eloquent, complaining;
As of one afar off crying,
  "Night is coming! Day is waning!"
Toward the voice the hunter glides,
Up the thorny mountain sides.

"Stay thee, stranger!" called the Carib;
"Vain to track a wandering spirit,
Bodiless as breeze of sunset.
'T is no living creature! hear it!
'Day is waning!' Without woe,
None upon his track may go."

Wailed along the hills the echo,
"Stay thee! stray not into danger!"
Smiling back from splintered ledges,
Up the beetling cliff the stranger
With the slanting sunbeam sped,
Lost in dark woods overhead.

"Will he come again?" They shudder,
Into lengthening shadows peering;
Through the sudden veil of night-fall
Joyfully his footfall hearing;
There the dark-eyed hunter stands,
Sheltering something in his hands!

"Look! a gray bird is your spirit!
On his breast the sunset lingers,
Golden as the hour he sings in:
Touch him! stroke him with light fingers!
Still a spirit, though with wings
Shaped like other birds, he sings."

Need we sail to Indian islands,
That through turquoise oceans glisten,
For strange misinterpretations
Wherewith men to nature listen?
Throbs the air we breathe with good,
By dull hearts misunderstood.

Dearer is the voice from heaven
Warning us that life is waning,
When we know its accents human,
Joy of all the years remaining. —
So, across the seas, I heard
Dominica's sunset-bird.

SEA AND SKY.

THE Sea is wedded to the Sky, —
  Element unto element:
She spreads above him tenderly
  Her blue, transparent tent.

The Sky is mated with the Sea:
  In stormy tumult he ascends
Toward her retreating mystery: —
  Not thus their being blends.

But when her deep, eternal calm
  Enters into his restless heart,
Each mirrors back the other's charm;
  Nearest, when most apart.

HORIZON.

SECLUDED and embowered to be
Under a whispering maple-tree,
That holds a nest, a flit of wings
Mid manifold leaf-flutterings, —
  Ah! peace and bliss of summer!
Yet every wind-waft that goes by,
Must leave an opening to the sky,
And every bough that lifts must show
A space of sea, a sunset glow,
  A glimpse of wide horizon.

Rest, lacking outlook, is not rest;
Close into our own boundaries pressed,
Our palaces have prison-walls,
Our moneyed poverty appals,
  Our millions count for nothing.
Our creed must have its break of doubt,
Where thought may sometimes flutter out,
And all the vast Beyond flow in;
The threshold where our hopes begin
  To climb, is our horizon.

Though rarely, unto me and you,
May mountain vistas bound the view,
Or the sea's glamour lead us on,
Through mystery into mystery drawn —
  Even hints are revelations:
The star-edged shadow of a leaf
On sunnier foliage, brings a brief
Suggestion of light's ungauged sea
To our dim covert; gives our tree
  Its universe-horizon.

In that faint breeze that stirs the bough,
I hear the great aerial plough
Furrowing the sky-fields, east and west:
Sphere-music overflows the nest
  Of yon home-keeping robin.
And in the sob that stole to me
From the vast anguish of the sea,
I felt the restless wastes of soul,
Life's fragments, fain to be made whole:
  The ear hath its horizon.

Though never barrier may inclose
The sturdy thought that climbs and grows, —
Though glimpsed the whole is in the least, —
Though healthy relish makes the feast, —
  Yet man may pine and dwindle:

And thus he wins distrust and dole;
Shutting the windows of his soul,
Kindling his little farthing-light,
And counting all without him night, —
  Himself his sole horizon.

In life's large invitation blest,
We seek a west beyond the west,
Whose boundless prairie-billows run
Toward grander beckonings of the sun;
  Man must explore, forever:
His heaven no limit has, no bars;
Yet, setting sail for unknown stars,
Green earth is to his footfall sweet:
These two his blessedness complete, —
  A home and a horizon.

R. W. E.

MAY 25, 1880.

DOORS hast thou opened for us, thinker, seer,
  Bars let down into pastures measureless;
The air we breathe to-day, through thee, is freer
  Than, buoyant with its freshness, we can guess.

Thy forehead toward the unrisen morning set, —
  Nature and life faced with their own calm gaze, —
No human thought inhospitably met, —
  Thou beckonest onward, as in earlier days:

A voice that wandered toward us, like a breeze,
  From great expanses beyond time and space,
With hints of unexplored eternities
  Stirring the sluggish soul new paths to trace;

A word that gave us lightness, as of wings, —
  Home, welcome, freedom in the Everywhere!
The mention of thy name, like Nature's, brings
  A sense of widening worlds and ampler air.

J. G. W.

DECEMBER 17, 1877.

BESIDE the Merrimack he sung
  His earliest songs, a Quaker boy,
His father's mowing-fields among,
  With brook and bird to share his joy.

And where the Powow glides to meet
  The swift rush of the Merrimack,
His manhood's voice rang strong and sweet,
  By struggling Freedom echoed back.

He sang beside the solemn sea,
  That thrilled through all its vast unrest,
Until the poet's land was free,
  To song's wild war-throb in his breast.

Among the mountains rose his voice,
  When Peace made beautiful the air:
Our souls rose with him to rejoice;
  Our lives looked larger, worthier, there.

And still he sings, by sea and stream,
The songs that charm a nation's heart;
We dare not guess how earth will seem
When his loved footsteps hence depart.

Still sings he, while the year grows gray,
From inner warmth no snows can chill:
Spring breathes through his December lay;
His song might waken bird and rill.

Neither can poet die, nor friend;
To Life, forever, both belong:
Before his human heart we bend,
Far nobler than his noblest song.

O. W. H.

AUGUST 29, 1879.

You may change the initials, and say, if you can,
H. O. W. it is, by what magical plan
He edges with wisdom the blade of his wit;
Gives his neatly-cut satire its delicate fit;
Fuses humor with pathos, a mixture so fine,
Heads are cleared and hearts touched, as by subtlest of wine.

You cannot tell how? Well, then, W. H. O.?
Who is he? His masterly lyrics we know;
We learned in our childhood the charm of his page,
And his verse does not show yet one sign of old age:
Though our own heads may whiten, he makes us feel young
With his songs, through all seasons so cheerily sung.

Go back to the O. W. H., that so long,
As a key, has unlocked for us story and song!
With the tools that he uses no tyro need play;
He is — just himself; works in — just his own way.
Leave the letters in order, — the sign of our debt;
The name that they stand for we cannot forget!

GROWING OLD.

OLD, — we are growing old:
Going on through a beautiful road,
Finding earth a more blessed abode;
Nobler work by our hands to be wrought,
Freer paths for our hope and our thought.
Because of the beauty the years unfold,
We are cheerfully growing old!

Old, — we are growing old:
Going up where the sunshine is clear;
Watching grander horizons appear
Out of clouds that enveloped our youth;
Standing firm on the mountains of truth.
Because of the glory the years unfold,
We are joyfully growing old.

Old, — we are growing old:
Going in to the gardens of rest
That glow through the gold of the West,

Where the rose and the amaranth blend,
And each path is the way to a friend.
Because of the peace that the years unfold,
We are thankfully growing old.

Old, — are we growing old?
Life blooms, as we travel on
Up the hills, into fresh, lovely dawn:
We are children, who do but begin
The sweetness of living to win.
Because heaven is in us, to bud and unfold,
We are younger, for growing old!

A PRAIRIE NEST.

WHEN youth was in its May-day prime,
Life's blossoming and singing time,
While heart and hope made cheerful chime,
We dropped into our cottage nest
Upon a prairie's mighty breast,
Soft billowing towards the unknown West.

Green earth beneath, blue sky above!
Through verdure vast the hidden dove
Sent plaintively her moan of love.
South wind and sunshine filled the air;
Thought flew in widening curves, to share
The large, sweet calmness everywhere.

In space two confluent rivers made —
Kaskaskia, that far southward strayed,
And Mississippi, sunk in shade
Of level twilights — nestled we,
As in the cleft branch of a tree;
Green grass, blue sky, all we could see.

Torch-like, our garden plot illumed
The sea-like waste, when sunset gloomed;
Its homely scents the night perfumed;
And through the long, bright noontide hours
Its tints outblazed the prairie flowers:
Gay, gay and glad, that nest of ours!

Our marigolds, our poppies red,
Straggling away from their trim bed,
With phlox and larkspur rioted;
And we, fresh-hearted, every day
Found fantasies wherewith to play,
As daring and as free as they.

The drumming grouse; the whistling quail;
Wild horses prancing down the gale;
A lonely tree, that seemed a sail
Far out at sea; a cabin-spark,
Winking at us across the dark;
The wolf's cry, like a watch-dog's bark;

And sometimes sudden jet and spire
Belting the horizon in with fire,
That writhed and died in serpent-gyre, —
Without a care we saw, we heard;
To dread or pleasure lightly stirred
As, in mid-flight, the homeward bird.

The stars hung low above our roof;
Rainbow and cloud-film wrought a woof
Of glory round us, danger-proof:
It sometimes seemed as if our cot
Were the one safe, selected spot
Whereon Heaven centred steadiest thought.

Man was afar, but God close by;
And we might fold our wings, or fly,
Beneath the sun, his open eye;
With bird and breeze in brotherhood,
We simply felt and understood
That earth was fair, that He was good.

Nature, so full of secrets coy,
Wrote out the mystery of her joy
On those broad swells of Illinois.
Her virgin heart to Heaven was true;
We trusted Heaven and her, and knew
The grass was green, the skies were blue,

And life was sweet! What find we more
In wearying quest from shore to shore?
Ah, gracious memory! to restore
Our golden West, its sun, its showers,
And that gay little nest of ours
Dropped down among the prairie flowers!

A WHISPER OF MEMORY.

How shall I bless thee, unforgotten friend?
A continent holds us asunder here:
They say that souls like meeting drops will blend
In heaven; but I thy earthly way would cheer.

Let me be unto thee like a fresh dawn
After a summer night of gentle rain,
When stifling droughts of yesterday are gone,
And cool and dewy growths arise again;

Or like a streamlet whispering down a hill
Secrets it hath from mountain-summits brought;
Playing about thy footsteps, pure and still, —
A voice that answers to thine inmost thought;

Or like the Indian Summer's laden air,
Rich with the fragrance of the whole year's flowers;
A sky, with tints of every season fair;
A breeze-like sweetness of remembered hours!

Ah! might I dream such beauty in me dwelt,
And could surround thee, a new heaven and earth,
It were enough if thou that influence felt;
To teach thee whence it rose were little worth.

And yet, if somewhat in these lovely things
Should make thee breathe my name, and start surprised,
With smiles and tears that half-waked memory brings,
Deep joy it were, to be thus recognized!

THROUGH MINNEHAHA'S VEIL.

Some subtle coloring of the air
  Lights every human countenance:
Some faces shine, transfigured, where
  A glorifying circumstance
Lifted them from their common phase,
To fitness for an aureole's rays.

Some single look comes back to us,
  Of eye and brow, through memory's blur,
Re-wakening dreams most beauteous,
  Setting the laggard pulse astir
To feel that still we hold it fast, —
The buried riches of the past.

Do you recall our holiday,
  Just out of school, in middle June, —
Far West, — the time so far away
  We cannot now revive the tune
To which our hearts so gayly beat?
We only know the song was sweet.

We watched the mountain-bluffs, that stood
  Fleece-wrapped amid the roseate morn,
Rising from Mississippi's flood;
  We gazed where leagues on leagues of corn,
Upon the river's farther side,
Tinged with warm gold the prairies wide.

We saw Winona's precipice
  Hang dark above Lake Pepin's wave:
Her plaintive legend who would miss?
  Or harmless war-whoop of the brave
Red-blanketed and painted Sioux,
That shot by in his birch canoe?

A step beyond the roadside's edge, —
  A rude bridge swung across a stream,
Sliding as softly from the ledge
  As one might whisper in a dream:
The mist-like water, falling there,
Seemed, half-way down, dissolved in air.

And where the drops broke into spray
  Of diamonds, forth by millions flung,
Wavering amid their wasteful play,
  A visionary rainbow hung.
What need of guide's intrusive call?
We knew it, — Minnehaha's Fall!

I had not missed you from my side,
When bubbled up a laugh as light
As out of naiad lips might glide;
And there you stood, a phantom bright,
Veiled by the spray, a rosy elf,
Merrier than Minnehaha's self.

Poised on the wet rock, in behind
The rainbow, with your face upturned,
Color and outline half defined,
Your dancing eyes, your cheek that burned
With pleasure, — I behold at will
The airy apparition still!

Years, years ago! The stream has spilt
Billions of diamonds since that day;
Mill, cabin, barn, by now are built
Close underneath that rainbow spray:
The lonely beauty of the place
Has passed from Minnehaha's face.

And yours, — I never see it now
Except as then, Time's blank between:
The sparkling eye, the lifted brow,
That brought a soul into the scene,
And made the Laughing Water seem
Again a bright, embodied dream.

I have your picture in my heart, —
No relic, for it lives and breathes;
The leaves of memory blow apart,
The wavering spray your forehead wreathes;
Your freshness never can grow pale,
Blooming through Minnehaha's veil,

IN VISION.

ALTHOUGH to me remains not one regret
For lovely possibilities that were ours,
Dreamed out across vast beds of prairie-flowers
Into the beckoning West, where the sun set,
A glowing magnet, drawing our hearts on
As if they were but one heart, after him,
Where all our blending future seemed to swim
In light unutterable, a new dawn,
An opening Eden, — although it was well
That picture faded, lingers yet its spell.

And I am glad I saw it, and with thee, —
Then near as my own spirit, — now as far
Removed into the unseen as that calm star
Which looked across the undulant grassy sea
Into our faces, and sank out of sight.
We dreamed a dream together ; nothing more
To thee ; to me a vision that before
Nor after broke the seals of heavenly light,
And showed me, rapt, life's beaker mystical,
Glimpsed and withdrawn, the untasted Holy Grail.

I gazed there at thy bidding: was it wrong?
I knew a separate path awaited me,
And I divined another quest for thee,
Under strange skies, where I did not belong:
But for one hour, letting Doubt stand aside,
I saw Life pass, transfigured in Love's form;
The mystery wherewith inmost heaven is warm,
Descended, clothed in whiteness, as a bride.
Though that apocalypse annulled thy claim,
Thine eyes yet burn their question through its flame.

Had but that fatal prescience been withheld,
Whereby To-morrow evermore would rise,
Laughing To-day down with relentless eyes,
What beauty had we not together spelled
Out of Life's wonder-book, — or else, what bale!
The dream was not fulfilled, — could never be;
Yet is the vision light of light to me,
Dazzling to blankness the world's bridal tale. —
Elsewhere our orbits meet, receding star,
Lost in the dawn that floods me from afar!

NEED AND WISH.

I NEED not what I cannot have:
  The north wind swept from me this folly, —
With lazy, fretful whine to crave
  Some comfort against melancholy,
Which haunts us all, when dreams go by
  Of what might be, if life were other
Than life is; therefore every sigh
  In working-songs I strive to smother.

You need not what you cannot have,
  Though torrid gusts of hopeless passion
Amid your fancies moan and rave,
  And mould your words to fiery fashion.
What if your wild desire would seize
  Some other heart's delight and glory?
Fate reigns not your one will to please;
  Not yours the only tragic story.

None needs the thing he cannot have:
  The gods know how to give right measure:

Through seeming loss our souls they save;
They will not leave us slaves of pleasure.
Yet from his longings who would rest?
To claim, to seek with firm endeavor,
Better that still transcends our best, —
By this path climbs the soul forever.

THRIFTLESS.

He said, "I will not save!
The liberal sun
Is richer for the light he gave
And gives the world. I choose to hold
The mine, and not to hoard the gold.
Can I be one
To dry my heart to coffered dust,
Or cling to hidden coin, a rust?

"Ask June to stint her bloom
Against the day
Of sorrowful November gloom!
Free blossom yields abundant seed;
June's thriftlessness is thrift indeed.
There is no way
To count November's added sighs,
Should lavish June turn pennywise.

"Among the immortal gods
Unthrift is thrift;

Worst poverty — with them at odds.
No wealth but this : to feel the flow
Of life's deep well to torrents grow,
A current swift,
Whereof no lingering drop would stay
Shut from the generous flood away."

He said, " If I give all
Open to sight,
The everything men riches call,
'T is clearing rubbish from my way
Into the avenues of day,
The doors of light.
Thriftless he can afford to be
Who finds the universe's key."

NO LOSS.

WHAT thou puttest by
Without a sigh,
Is not wanted for God's treasury.

Nor is that a wise,
True sacrifice,
When a stifled aspiration dies.

To His poorest, lest
Thou miss life's quest,
Freely give, like Him, thy very best.

Flame from flame is caught;
Love grudgeth naught;
Keep, that thou mayest share, thy heaven-lit thought.

Go to, hungry heart!
Standing apart,
Gazing on abundance, starving art?

Never lay the blame
On God's great name,
For the lack that of thy choosing came!

Courage! serve and wait!
Soon or late,
Life restores the missing keys of Fate.

Every hour brings seed
That, sown, will feed
Some half-famished Future's eager need.

All thy unclaimed gold,
Riches untold,
Time for thee with usury will hold.

Near thee, close before,
Opens a door:
Enter, heart, and hunger nevermore!

WHAT COMETH?

'T is never the expected guest
  Whose charmed approach rewards our waiting:
A nobler brings us royal rest;
  A meaner comes, with footsteps grating.
What hinders that, or hastens this?
  The encounter neither wholly chooses;
Thy friend for thee elected is, —
  And who the gift of God refuses?

It never is the dreaded pain:
  Forbear thy mad foretaste of sorrow!
Thou fillest the Future's cup in vain;
  Fate spills, to pour new wine to-morrow.
And Fate is God, and God is good;
  His bitter draught works perfect healing.
Why look for poison in thy food
  When Love's own hand is with thee dealing?

Never arrives the dreamed-of joy;
  But something larger, deeper, better,

That makes thy old ideal a toy,
  And binds thee with a blissful fetter
To the all-beauteous soul of things. —
  Hold steady, heart, by night-storms shaken;
The fluttering hope that in thee sings,
  To boundless freedom shall awaken!

A FRIEND.

LIFE offers no joy like a friend:
Fulfillment and prophecy blend
In the throb of a heart with our own,—
A heart where we know and are known.

Yet more than thy friend unto thee,
Is the friendship hereafter to be,
When the flower of thy life shall unfold
Out of hindering and darkness and cold.

Love mocks thee, whose mounting desire
Doth not to the Perfect aspire;
Nor lovest thou the soul thou wouldst win
To shut with thine emptiness in.

A friend! Deep is calling to deep!
A friend! The heart wakes from its sleep,
To behold the worlds lit by one face;
With one heavenward step to keep pace.

O Heart wherein all hearts are known,
Whose infinite throb stirs our own!
O Friend beyond friends! what are we,
Who ask so much less, yet have Thee!

MY FEAR.

Beyond the boundaries of the grave send I
A single fear, —
One only, for myself. Beneath God's eye
The eternal mountains rise in sunshine clear,
And through unwithering woodlands, far and near,
Float hymns of happy souls, like bird-songs high.

Somewhere in that large, beautiful Unknown,
My place will be;
And somewhere, clasped within its boundless zone,
O spirits I have clung to here, will ye
Fulfill your dreams of immortality;
My fear is, to be left of you alone.

I know not what awaits, of bliss or bale;
I only know
That of God's guardianship no soul can fail:
But, whether on dusk oceans drifted slow,
Or swift through populous starry streets we go,
Welcome will be loved voices, calling, "Hail!"

We mortals veil such depths of loneliness
With outward calm,
And with the hope of heaven's complete redress
For earthly losses! Failing of that balm,
How can we have the heart for chant or psalm,
Or read our life as more than meaningless?

Yet noble work will there go nobly on;
For love and thought
Will find a grander scope when earth is gone:
Mine, haply, must in solitude be wrought,
Or with heaven's foreigners: I may be brought
Never to those I knew, time's road upon.

You, best belovèd, may new neighbors find,
Whose gifts will blend
With every upward reach of heart and mind:
Toiling among them for some glorious end,
Perhaps you wholly will forget the friend
You walked with, in green pastures left behind.

Shall we then grow more saintly, waxing cold
And deaf to all
The tenderness that breathing lips have told?
Doth not God speak in every human call?
Loss is it, from one trusted heart to fall,
Though shipwrecked among splendors manifold.

Still, in that ample realm, none may intrude
On the domain
Of separate, inmost being: if he could,
We should wish back our mortal shells again,
For shelter and seclusion; should complain,
Might we not sometimes hide, even from the good.

And who the dearest of his friends would bind
Unto his side
In any world, without a willing mind?
Who needs me not, must not with me abide,
Howe'er my need may seem. Since God is guide,
Each pilgrim soul his lonely way shall find:

And in the untravelled wilderness shall bloom
Life's perfect rose.
A Heart divinely human through the gloom
Throbs like a guiding footstep, — warms and glows,
Until the dark with dayspring overflows,
And the bowed soul is crowned with blissful doom.

And so I drop at last my single fear;
In His sweet will
Hiding my own heart's dream, however dear:
All that concerneth me will He fulfill;
No drop of joy His steady hand can spill:
Nor do I wait for heaven, since heaven is here.

COME HOME![1]

Come home with me, beloved, —
  Home to the heart of God!
In lonely, separate by-ways
  We long enough have trod.
Away from rest and shelter
  Why should we further press?
The end of our self-seeking
  Is only homelessness.

Come home with me, beloved!
  God's children have but one;
Its windows glow and glisten,
  Lit from beyond the sun:
Its golden hearth fires beckon
  To all, and aye to each

[1] "Then I said in my heart, 'Come home with me, beloved, — there is but one home for us all. When we find — in proportion as each of us finds — that home, shall we be gardens of delight to each other, little chambers of rest, galleries of pictures, wells of water.'" — MacDonald's *Seaboard Parish*.

In deserts deep entangled,
  Where but His eye can reach.

Come home with me, beloved!
  These earthly homes of ours
Lift up their dull clay turrets
  To hide heaven's pearly towers.
We stay shut in, distrustful,
  Behind our threshold line;
But He, with boundless welcome,
  Flings wide His gates divine.

Come home with me, beloved!
  The dearest of the dear
Is never comprehended
  Or rightly measured here:
But we shall know each other
  At last, grown pure and wise,
Reading Truth's radiant secret
  With Love's enlightened eyes.

Come home with me, beloved!
  Each in that house shall have
His own peculiar chamber,
  Filled with the gifts He gave, —
The mansion's Lord, our Father;
  While, sons and princes there,

Each royally with others
His blessedness shall share.

Come home with me, beloved, —
Home to God's waiting heart!
In gladness met together
From paths too long apart,
Strangers no more, but brethren,
One life with Him to live;
Eternally receiving,
Eternally to give!

BEFRIENDED.

My heart records thee friend, yet through no word
Spoken in side-by-side companionship:
Reproof or commendation from thy lip
Never my heart with pleasant trouble stirred
Because it was thy special gift to me;
A larger blessing have I won from thee.

I heard thee speak out of diviner air
Than selfishness can breathe in, and I rose,
And saw the gates of heavenly truth unclose,
Glad with the multitude the feast to share,
Spread for all souls within. No narrow claim
Could wish of mine in that pure vision frame.

Thou didst befriend me, humbled at the sight
Of that great Love which penetrates the need
Of every feeblest creature; which indeed
Lifts back into the brotherhood of light
Benighted and neglected souls, to trace
Their Godlike lineage in Christ's dear face.

In that communion of unselfishness
Which is content its own delight to lose,
So through some weaker being to transfuse
The breath it lives by, — that high blessedness
Wherein faith's answer is at last complete, —
My soul arose, and went thy soul to meet.

How idle then seemed earth's small jealousies;
How pitiful the fret of "mine" and "thine"!
The delicate draught of adulation's wine,
The subtle poison of sweet flatteries,
Take nor bestow thou, friend, if thou wouldst know
How hearts in blessing hearts may overflow.

The world has not learned friendship's meaning yet;
Little indeed is all thou hast to give,
If it is but thine own; but bid me live
Largeness of life beyond thee, and my debt
Eternally uncancelled will remain,
And we, though strangers, have not met in vain.

Show me that aspiration need not die,
Nor faith put out its eyes to walk by sight;
Lead me into the freedom of the light,
And I could let thee pass on cheerfully
To souls whose need was greater, though thy face
Had been the sunshine of my dwelling place.

For friendship is not ours to lock away
In stifling chests, for fear of thievish hands;
It is a generous sun-warmth, that expands
The soul it flows through, turning night to day, —
Light given to us to give abroad again,
Till none in unblessed darkness shall remain.

A friend, — it is another name for God,
Whose love inspires all love, is all in all:
Profane it not, lest lowest shame befall!
Worship no idol, whether star or clod!
Nor think that any friend is truly thine,
Save as life's closest link with Love Divine.

Thou art no stranger, thou whose soul I heard
Speak to my soul across earth's vexing din;
With thee I to the Holiest entered in:
Through thee I understood the Master's word,
Which the whole heavenly with the human blends
In deathless union, — "I have called you friends."

F. W. R.

Books are as waymarks for us, looking back
  Far up and down the road :
There rested we, out of the beaten track,
  Where a clear streamlet flowed,
And in the running brook a message heard,
  Limpid as truth, and sweet
As to the waiting angels, God's dear word :
  And there our hill-side seat
Took in horizons, felt the mysteries
  Of the untrodden height,
While every leaf in all the sheltering trees
  Stirred us to strange delight.

Leaves for the healing of the nations, thrilled
  By the Eternal Breath, —
Under their strengthening shade our hearts were stilled,
  Nor dreaded life or death,
But only felt God's presence, — only saw
  The ever-widening scope

Of Being whose perfection is our law,
  Who lifts our human hope
To His own infinite, close neighborhood,
  By humble pathways plain,
Through very simpleness misunderstood:—
  Such books none write in vain.

There are who fear lest thought should be too free:
  Yet, in this world of His,
Who does God's will may share His liberty;
  Light for its seeker is.
O Robertson! thy life was in thy creed,
  That love is sacrifice;
That all the ways of wisdom Christ-ward lead;
  That man lives, when self dies!
Soldier-apostle! flashes through thy page
  Truth's keen Ithuriel flame;
And thine the heart of a believing age
  Links with its Saviour's name.

SHOW ME THY WAY.

DARK the night, the snow is falling;
Through the storm are voices calling;
Guides mistaken and misleading,
Far from home and help receding;
  Vain is all those voices say:
    Show me Thy way!

Blind am I as those who guide me;
Let me feel Thee close beside me!
Come as light into my being!
Unto me be eyes, All-Seeing!
  Hear my heart's one wish, I pray:
    Show me Thy way!

Son of Man and Lord Immortal,
Opener of the heavenly portal,
In Thee all my hope is hidden;
Never yet was soul forbidden
  Near Thee, always near, to stay:
    Show me Thy way!

Thou art Truth's eternal morning;
Led by Thee, all evil scorning,
Through the paths of pure salvation,
I shall find Thy habitation,
  Whence I never more shall stray:
    Show me Thy way!

Thou must lead me, and none other;
Truest Lover, Friend, and Brother,
Thou art my soul's shelter, whether
Stars gleam out or tempests gather;
  In Thy presence night is day:
    Show me Thy way!

THE HEART OF GOD.

O LIFE, that breathest in all sweet things
  That bud and bloom upon the earth,
That fillest the sky with songs and wings,
  That walkest the world through human birth;

O Life, that lightest in every man
  A spark of Thine own being's flame,
And wilt that spark to glory fan,
  Our listening souls would hear Thy name.

Thou art the Eternal Christ of God, —
  The Life unending, unbegun;
The Deity brightening through the clod;
  The presence of the Invisible One.

Though dear traditions wrap Thee round
  In Bethlehem and in Nazareth,
With every soul Thy home is found,
  On every shore of life and death.

Before the pyramids were built,
  Before the time of Abraham,
To the world's first-born, blind with guilt,
  Thou camest, the enlightening word, "I AM."

To free from sin's entangling mesh
  Our wandering race, Thy brethren dear,
Thou veiledst Thyself in mortal flesh, —
  A man with men Thou didst appear.

The voice that unto poet and sage
  Whispered of God at hand, unknown,
Hath written itself on history's page,
  Speaks in a language like our own;

Speaks to us now, from day to day,
  Wafts heavenly peace through earthly care;
Inspires our faint humanity
  Thy crown to seek, Thy cross to bear.

Thy voice is sweet in brook and bird,
  And boughs that over our home-roofs bend;
And dear in every kindly word,
  Borne from the lip of friend to friend.

Thy smile is in the wayside flower,
  That opens like a child's blue eye,

Not less than in the sunset hour,
When breathless wonder thrills the sky.

Thou livest, most human, most Divine!
To no veiled Fate or Force we bow:
Far off God's blinding splendors shine;
His near, deep tenderness art Thou!

His heart, whose truth can never fail,
However ours may change or stray;
Before whose love all friendships pale;
Our trust when worlds and suns decay.

For love remains, whatever dies;
The love that breathed us into bloom,
And set us in the eternities,
To fill their void with life's perfume.

Revealer of our being's design,
Through Thee, because of Thee, we are:
Sacred our life, since it is Thine;
No hopeless blight its growth shall mar.

Into the awful vague of death
We follow, where Thou leadest the way;
Feel, through its damps, Thy living breath,
See Thee flood all its dark with day.

We follow, and we find our own,
Whom the grave covered from our sight;
We know them, even as we are known,
Clothed on with Heaven's transfiguring light.

O Love, O Friend, our toil is sweet,
Our burden light, for Thou art near;
And Nature's harmonies repeat
Thy Name, to every creature dear.

O Love, O Friend, Thy name is God!
Lord of the unseen and the known!
Thy thoughts the universe have trod,
With worlds like sands of silver strown.

The lonely spheres cry out to Thee
To multiply Thy life in them:
Souls worthier than the stars must be
To sparkle in Thy diadem.

There are who hold Thy truth, and yet
Thyself disown, its origin;
Thee as a stranger they have met,
Nor recognized the Guest within.

And some who seem to hear are deaf;
Lip-service mocks thy sacrifice:

Unlovingness is unbelief;
Untruthful lives are heresies.

But where men aim at noblest things,
Where beats a pure and generous heart,
Where thought leads up on heavenward wings,
There, Saviour of the world, Thou art!

One God to all eternity,
Thou livest, the Only and the Same;
Yet ever to humanity
Art dearest by Thy human name.

Weary of system and of plan,
Life of our life, we turn to Thee;
Divine Ideal of struggling man,
Help us in man Thy face to see!

Lead us through these bewildering ways
Of pain and beauty Thou hast trod!
Thou art our creed, our prayer, our praise,
Christ, the Omnipotent Heart of God!

INDWELLING.

O SPIRIT whose name is the Saviour,
  Come enter this spirit of mine,
And make it forever Thy dwelling,
  A home wherein all things are Thine!

O Son of the Father Eternal,
  Once with us, a Friend and a Guest,
Abide in Thine own human mansion,
  Its Joy and its Hope and its Rest!

Leave in me no darkness unlighted,
  Unwarmed by Thy truth's holy fire —
No thought which Thou canst not inhabit —
  No purpose Thou dost not inspire!

Shut in unto silence, my midnight
  Is dawn, if Thy Presence I see;
When I open my doors to Thy coming,
  Lo! all things are radiant with Thee.

O what is so sweet as to love Thee,
And live with Thee always in sight?
Lord, enter this house of my being,
And fill every room with Thy light!

PRAYING ALWAYS.

Soul of our souls, only by Thee
The way we see
Through earth's entangling mystery;
We nothing know;
But prayer unbars heaven's gate, and Thou dost show
The one sure path in which we ought to go.

And this is prayer; from self to turn
Thee-ward, and learn
Our life's veiled angels to discern.
Filled with Thy light
We hate the damning evil, love the right:
Awake with Thee, there is in us no night.

Were ours the wish, as vain as strange,
Thy will to change,
Or Thy least purpose disarrange, —
This were not prayer,
But only a rebellious heart laid bare,
Insanely choosing curses for its share.

Thou present God! to Thee we speak:
Weary and weak,
Thy strength Divine we struggling seek!
Thou wilt attend
To every faintest sigh we upward send;
Thou talkest with our thoughts, as friend with friend.

The battle of our life is won,
And heaven begun,
When we can say, "Thy will be done!"
But, Lord, until
These restless hearts in Thy deep love are still,
We pray thee, "Teach us how to do Thy will!"

We cry with Ajax, Give us light!
A glimpse, a sight
Of midnight foes that we must fight!
They hide within,
They lurk without, the subtle hordes of sin:
By mortal might, shall no man victory win.

The prayer of faith availeth much:
Thou hearest such:
Thy hand we in the darkness touch.
Oh, not apart
Stayest Thou on some high throne, all-loving Heart!
Helper in times of need, we know Thou art.

Nor nursing each our own distress,
To Thee we press;
Prayer's overflow drowns selfishness:
Soul within soul,
One voice to Thee our linked petitions roll;
Healer of the world's hurt, oh, make us whole!

And when arise serener days,
Whose air is praise,
The song of thankfulness we raise
On high shall be,
Not that to some vast All we bend the knee,
But that each soul has one sure friend in Thee.

Soul of our souls, with boundless cheer
Forever near,
Our being's breath and atmosphere, —
The world seems bleak
Only when shelter in drear self we seek:
The joy of life is, man to Thee may speak!

CHRIST THE LIGHT.

OUT of labyrinths of thought,
  Where bewildering gleams confuse,
From our wanderings have we brought
  Only broken, tangled clews:
But this one thing certain is,—
  In Thy world, O God, Thou art!
Wearied with earth's mysteries,
  We would rest upon Thy heart!

Thou, Immanuel, God with us,
  Feelest all our human need:
From Thy guidance glorious
  Let no falsehood us mislead!
Only by Thy breath alive—
  Only through Thy life complete—
Help us upward still to strive,
  In the prints of Thy dear feet!

As the planets to the sun,
  We would moor our souls to Thee!

Kindle us, All-Heavenly One,
  Torches of Thy truth to be!
Thou in our humanity,
  We as rays of Thee to shine,
Centred, fixed, sustained in Thee,
  Light supreme and Life Divine!

A STRAY LEAF.

In Eastern legend, the good Mussulman
Saves every parchment-shred beneath his feet,
Hoping thereon great Allah's name to meet.

Is not the Book of Life yet incomplete?
Who looks abroad, its scattered leaves may find
Flying upon the wild wings of the wind.

Though torn, though hidden unseemly blots behind,
Each soul of man reveals the Name Divine.
Leaves of His volume are thy being and mine:

Leaves of His Book, and parts of His great plan. —
Dear Father, Thy handwriting make us see
On each soiled fragment of humanity!

NOT PURE, BUT PURIFIED.

How cleanse a heart that is defiled?
God may forgive the sin,
But guilt is canker, and eats in;
Is tempest, bringing shipwreck wild:
Yet only as a little child
Shall man His kingdom win.

The pearl of innocence, once lost,
Can never be replaced
Upon the brow its whiteness graced:
Yet unto swine such pearls are tossed;
And earth is paved with gems of cost,
Scattered in spendthrift waste.

Alas! we cannot purely love —
We cannot nobly hate:
Our tears of blood are wept too late:
With halting steps we upward move,
Fearing lest even our house above
Be left us desolate.

And if there were no Voice to say,
" Go thou, and sin no more !
Love, that forgives, can all restore ;
Thou art made whole ! " — could any stay
Heart-bare beneath truth's probing ray,
Unscathed by terrors sore ?

O Christ ! the memory of our sin
Thy healing love will hide :
With Thee our souls in peace abide :
In Thee heaven's childhood we begin :
Thy Kingdom we shall enter in,
Not pure, but purified !

MYRA.[1]

DESPAIR not thou of any fallen soul's fate,
  Till thou hast knelt beside it in the mire,
And mingled with its moanings desolate
  The heavenward whisper of thy heart's desire;
Till thou hast felt it thrill with thine own faith
  In Him who looks not on us as we are,
But wakes the immortal in us by His breath,
  And puts remembrance of our sins afar.

The noblest creature of a human birth
  Rose to its beauteous dignity of place,
Not without many a lingering stain of earth,
  Wherein all souls are set, a little space;
And thou into the haunts of shame and crime
  Like an awakening breeze of Heaven mayest go,
Knowing that out of blackest depths of slime
  May spring up lilies whiter than the snow.

[1] A true story, — a reminiscence of the North End Mission in Boston, some ten years since. Myra is still living a happy and useful life, in a country home.

It was a dreary, gusty day in March:
A motley group were gathered in a room
Of a vile street, where curses blurred the arch
Of bending heaven, and stained its azure bloom
With the foul breath of throats on fire with hell;
Yet here together had they come to pray —
Wretches who knew the Name blasphemed too well,
And saints who leaned on it for staff and stay.

A dark-haired girl sat with bowed head alone,
Stifling the sobs that shook her slender frame,
When one arose, and told, in humbled tone,
How, tired and sick, to God's large house he came,
And as a son at once was made at home!
'T was agony to hear of Heaven's lost wealth;
They tortured her, those white souls, beckoning "Come!"
And she arose, and sought the door by stealth.

Myra! Her young life's freshness trailed through sin, —
Its perfume changed to stench and loathliness, —
Soiled to thought's inmost vesture, — can she win
The heart of Him who hates unrighteousness?
Within, those pleading accents still went on;
Outside, unseemly mirth defiled the air;

Behind her, Life's closed gate; before, Death's yawn;
Whichever way she turned, some new despair!

A woman's step approaches, undismayed;
A woman's voice is whispering, "Return!"
A woman's hand is on her shoulder laid;
And "Myra!" murmur stainless lips that yearn
To breathe their blessing through a sister's woe.
"Nay, let me be!" the wretched Myra cries;
"You would not touch my garments could you know
How sunk I am — too low even to despise!

"Hell seethes around me in this dreadful street;
Into it let me plunge, it is my place;
Heaven's pavement is too pure for my false feet,
And earth has nothing for me but disgrace."
"But, Myra, think! It is not I that speak;
The message is from Christ, the Undefiled;
Behold His hand put forth through mine to seek
And lead you back! Come home to Him, poor child!"

And tenderly a warm white hand is laid
In outcast Myra's; and the eyes that bend

From blue serenity their proffered aid —
She knows them for the true eyes of a friend;
And through them, in that moment, seems to break
A glimpse of her own purified womanhood;
Therein doth some divine suggestion make
Celestial possibilities understood.

The eyes, the hand remove not; and once more,
Following, she knows not how, the way they lead,
The threshold crossed, she is within the door:
She murmurs: "Is there hope for me, indeed?"
And every knee is by one impulse bowed;
And every heart goes up for her in prayer;
And Myra speaks her soul's resolve aloud,
Casting aside, with fear, her vast despair.

Crushed and ashamed, but now in her right mind,
She goes forth where those loving counsels guide,
Shelter and kindly ministries to find,
And strength to breast the mighty social tide
That surges with its currents pitiless
Against such tossed and helpless waifs as she.
Will she again drift wide from happiness?
Can peace in hearts like hers a tenant be?

Listen! Far down the ages rings the Word:
"Scarlet with guilt, ye shall be white as snow!"

"Loving much, be forgiven much!" The dear
Lord,
The Infinite Purity, spake to sinners so,
And speaketh still. Oh! mortal, who art thou,
That darest to any soul His peace forbid,
Nor pardon to the erring wilt allow,
Heedless of stains in thine own bosom hid?

Now Myra, sitting at her innocent work,
Like happier women, finds life grow so sweet!
If in her heart remorseful memories lurk,
She, face to face, may her accusers meet;
For Christ's seal on the closed book of the Past
Hath set forgiveness: Love's baptismal dew
Blends with her tears, and through them, falling
fast,
She hears His voice: "Lo! I make all things
new!"

And what if she be drifted back again,
Toward the black whirlpool, by temptation's
stress?
Say not that her repentance was in vain—
Nor stay thy hand from her in wretchedness,
Till she once more stand upright before Heaven,
Firm in humility, and so endure:

Seven times forgive her; — yea, and seven times
seven, —
Or till thyself art as an angel pure!

Her future is before her; so is thine:
Hers, with an evil blight upon her youth;
Thine, with all influences to guard, refine,
And lure thy spirit upward into truth.
We stand or fall together; whoso shuns
A suffering soul, must from God's way depart:
No stumbling-block before His little ones
Can hurt them like a cold, hard human heart.

Who sows for Heaven, with Heaven at last shall
reap;
The sheaves bound up, the gleanings gathered in,
Sower and reaper harvest-home shall keep:
And all along the field — this world of sin —
Shall hope spring up and sweeten the wide air, —
Love's holy breath scent every plant that
grows, —
Heaven's light burst from earth's darkness every-
where, —
All wildernesses blossom as the rose!

YE DID IT UNTO ME.

SINCE Christ is still alive in every man
Who has within him one upspringing germ
Of heavenward-reaching life, though crushed, infirm,
And dwindling in the hot simooms that fan
Only the jungle-growths of earth, — we can
Best minister to Him by helping them
Who dare not touch His hallowed garment's hem:
Their lives are even as ours, — one piece, one plan.
Him know we not, Him shall we never know,
Till we behold Him in the least of these
Who suffer or who sin. In sick souls He
Lies bound and sighing; asks our sympathies:
Their grateful eyes Thy benison bestow,
Brother and Lord, — "Ye did it unto Me."

WOMAN'S EASTER.

With Mary, ere dawn, in the garden,
I stand at the tomb of the Lord;
I share in her sorrowing wonder;
I hear through the darkness a word,
The first the dear Master hath spoken,
Since the awful death-stillness was broken.

He calleth her tenderly — "Mary!"
Sweet, sweet is His voice in the gloom.
He spake to us first, O my sisters,
So breathing our lives into bloom!
He lifteth our souls out of prison!
We, earliest, saw Him arisen!

He lives! Read you not the glad tidings
In our eyes, that have gazed into His?
He lives! By His light on our faces
Believe it, and come where He is!
O doubter, and you who denied Him,
Return to your places beside Him!

The message of His resurrection,
To man it was woman's to give:
It is fresh in her heart through the ages:—
"He lives, that ye also may live,
Unfolding, as He hath, the story
Of manhood's attainable glory."

O Sun on our souls first arisen,
Give us light for the spirits that grope!
Make us loving and steadfast and loyal
To bear up humanity's hope!
O Friend who forsakest us never,
Breathe through us thy errands forever!

WHY LIFE IS SWEET.

Because it cometh up, a heavenly flower,
  Out of the earth — divinely sown therein —
To gather grace from shadow and from shower,
  And freshness of invisible worlds to win
Unto itself — not to be hoarded there,
But for the sweetening of the common air.

Because it breathes in and exhales God's breath,
  Its natural atmosphere, and so grows strong
To root itself amid decay and death,
  And lifts its head above the poisonous Wrong,
And, with far-reaching fibres, push apart
The noisome evils clutching at earth's heart.

It is not sweet, but bitter, sad, and vain,
  Living in shows of what we are or do:
The after-taste of selfishness is pain:
  In hearts that grovel, hope must grovel, too:
Ever our petty falsehoods deathward tend,
Leave us defeated, cheated of life's end.

It is not sweet to compass our low aim,
  And sicken of it; — nor to trail the wing
In dust, whereon eternal dawn should flame:
  Even love, sin-touched, is an unwholesome thing,
A growth reversed, blight clinging into blight;
Love, meant to hallow all things with its light.

To live! to find our life in nobler lives,
  Baptized with them in dews of holiness,
Strengthened, upraised, by every soul that thrives
  In the clear air of perfect righteousness,
And sheltering that which might for frailty die,
When, with hot feet, the whirlwind rushes by!

Oh, sweet to live, to love, and to aspire!
  To know that whatsoever we attain,
Beyond the utmost summit of desire,
  Heights upon heights eternally remain,
To humble us, to lift us up, to show
Into what luminous deeps we onward go.

Because the Perfect, evermore postponed,
  Yet ever beckoning, is our only goal:
Because the deathless Love that sits enthroned
  On changeless Truth, holds us in firm control:
Because within God's Heart our pulses beat —
Because His Law is holy — life is sweet!

Because it is of Him — His infinite gift,
  Lost, but restored by One who came to share
His riches with our poverty, and lift
  The human to the heavenly, everywhere;
Because in Christ we breathe immortal breath,
Sweet, sweet is life! He hath abolished death!

THE TRUE WITNESS.

DEAR friend, I heard thee say to me,
"Christ is a dream:
The fiction of thy heart is He, —
Its self-lit gleam."

In vain I tried think the thought:
Life so bereft,
So empty, fancy pictured not;
Nothing was left: —

Scarcely the earth whereon I stood;
A star grown dim:
Earth, its Creator made so good,
So full of Him!

For all truth in humanity
With Him is one:
Through His dear children God I see;—
Father through Son.

Thine own pure life, — thought, word, and deed,
A holy flame, —
In lines of light that all may read,
Writes out His name.

No loving voice, however weak,
But echoes His!
Dear friend, because I hear thee speak,
I know He is!

DAILY BREAD.

WHAT is the daily bread,
  Father, we ask of Thee,—
We, who must still be fed
  Out of Thy bounty free?

Not at the household board
  Is our deep want supplied:
Bins may be amply stored,
  And souls unsatisfied.

For not by bread alone,
  Can we, Thy children, live:
Some heavenly food unknown
  Thou unto us must give.

We ask not meat to nurse
  Ambition's vain desire,
Nor greed of gain — the curse
  Of inward cankering fire.

Nor the poor, tasteless husks
That swine have torn and trod
And ground with beastly tusks:
Let clod be given to clod!

Nurtured we all must be
By Thy sweet Word alone:
Asking this bread of Thee,
Thou wilt not give a stone.

Thy Life, O God! Thy Word
Outspoken through Thy Son!
In Him our prayer is heard;
Our heart's desire is won.

To sacrifice — to share —
To give, even as He gave:
For others' wants to care;
Not our own lives to save; —

With love for all around
Our days and hours to fill: —
Thus be it ever found
Our meat to do Thy will!

This is the living bread
Which cometh down from Heaven,

Wherewith our souls are fed;
The pure, immortal leaven.

The hidden manna this,
Whereof who eateth, he
Grows up in perfectness
Of Christ-like symmetry.

Who seeks this bread, shall be
Nor stinted, nor denied:
Our hungry souls in Thee,
O Christ! are satisfied!

MY CUP RUNNETH OVER.

WHEREFORE drink with me, friends! It is no
draught
Of red intoxication; at its brim
No vine-wreathed head of Bacchus ever laughed —
This homely cup of mine, now worn and dim
With time's rough usage; no bright bubbles swim,
Or foam-beads sparkle over. — Have ye quaffed
The waters clear that through green pastures glide,
Where they who love the Shepherd follow Him?
Brimmed with His peace, my soul is satisfied:
Cooled are my feverish fancies; calmed the stir
Of dreams whose end was only bitterness.
Healed at this fount our inmost ail would be,
Did we but health before disease prefer.
My cup is filled at wells whose blessedness
A world's thirst cannot drain. Friends, drink with
me!

OUR CHRIST.

In Christ I feel the heart of God
  Throbbing from heaven through earth:
Life stirs again within the clod,
  Renewed in beauteous birth.
The soul springs up, a flower of prayer,
Breathing His breath out on the air.

In Christ I touch the hand of God.
  From His pure height reached down,
By blessed ways before untrod,
  To lift us to our crown;
Victory that only perfect is
Through loving sacrifice, like His.

Holding His hand, my steadied feet
  May walk the air, the seas;
On life and death His smile falls sweet—
  Lights up all mysteries:
Stranger nor exile can I be
In new worlds where He leadeth me.

Not my Christ only; He is ours;
Humanity's close bond;
Key to its vast, unopened powers,
Dream of our dreams beyond.
What yet we shall be, none can tell;
Now are we His, and all is well.

THE LADDER OF ANGELS.

WHEN Jacob slept in Bethel, and there dreamed
  Of angels ever climbing and descending
A ladder, whose last height of splendor seemed
  With glory of the Ineffable Presence blending,
The place grew sacred to his reverent thought.
He said: "Lo! God is here. I knew it not."

And wherefore did they fold their wings of light,
  Of swiftness, and of strength, those beings holy,
And up to dawn celestial, through earth's night,
  Like mortals, step by step, go toiling slowly?
Was it to teach themselves the painful way
Man's feet must take to their familiar day?

Or was it that the traveller, laid asleep
  On his stone pillow, with an inward seeing,
Should learn how mightiest spirits reach the steep
  And glorious possibilities of being, —
Not by a visionary flight sublime,
But up the foot-worn ladder-rounds of time?

Foretold they His descent, the Son of God;
Who humbly clothed Himself in vestments mortal,
And so, encumbered with our weakness, trod
With us the stairway to His Father's portal, —
To life whose inner secret none can win
Save by surmounting earthliness and sin?

The patriarch's vision — not for him alone
Lighted that golden mystery his slumber;
Beneath it slept a world of souls unknown:
When God sets up a sign, no man may number
Its meanings infinite. Who runneth reads,
And finds the interpretation that he needs.

Wherever upward, even the lowest round,
Man by a hand's help lifts his feebler brother,
There is the house of God and holy ground:
The gate of Heaven is Love; there is none other.
When generous act blooms from unselfish thought
The Lord is with us, though we know it not.

This ladder is let down in every place
Where unto nobler virtues men aspire:
Our human lineaments gain angel grace,
Leaving behind low aim and base desire:
Deserts of earth are changed to Bethel thus;
The vision is for every one of us.

WINTER MIDNIGHT.

SPEAK to us out of midnight's heart,
Thou who forever sleepless art!
The thoughts of Night are still and deep;
She doth Thy holiest secrets keep.

The voices of the day perplex;
Her crossing lights mislead and vex:
We trust ourselves to find Thy way,
Or, proudly free, prefer to stray.

The night brings dewfall, still and sweet;
Soft shadows fold us to Thy feet:
Thy whisper in the dark we hear,—
"Soul, cling to me! none else is near."

Speak to us by white winter's breath,
Thou Life behind the mask of death,
That makest the snowfall eloquent
As summer's stir in earth's green tent!

Close unto Winter's quiet breast,
Summer, a sleeping babe, is pressed:
Till waking-time she safe will hold
His bloom and freshness manifold.

O Night and Winter! Cold and gloom!
O marble mystery of the tomb!
God's hieroglyphs to man are ye;
Sealed visions of what yet shall be.

Better is blessedness concealed
From sight, than joy to sense revealed.
Thanks for this happy mortal breath:
Praise, for the life wrapped up in death!

SEA-SIDE HYMN.

INTO the ocean of Thy peace,
Almighty One, my thoughts would flow;
Bid their unrestful murmuring cease,
And Thy great calmness let me know!

The world is bright and glad in Thee!
No hopeless gloom her face enshrouds:
Joy lights her mountains, thrills her sea,
And weaves gay tints through all her clouds.

The shadow, Father, is our own,
That sends across our path a stain:
The discord is in us alone,
That makes the echoing earth complain.

O God, how beautiful is life,
Since Thou its soul and sweetness art!
How dies its childish fret and strife
On thy all-harmonizing heart!

Leaving behind me dust and clay,
  From selfish hindrances set free,
I find at last my broadening way
  Unto my ocean-rest in Thee.

One soul with Thee forevermore,
  Borne high beyond the gulfs of death,—
A joy that ripples on Thy shore,—
  With Life's vast hymn I blend my breath.

DRAWING NEARER.

ARE we daily drawing nearer
  Thee, the Perfect, the Unseen?
Grows the pathway ever clearer,
  Stretching sense and God between?
Thine own messengers beside us
  Wait, wherever we may be;
Earth and heaven are met, to guide us
    Nearer unto Thee.

In the web of beauty's weaving,
  In the picture and the song,
In our dreaming and believing,
  By our friendships borne along,
By our own heart's human story,
  By the light on land and sea,
Glimpsing unimagined glory,
    Draw we nearer Thee?

In our doings and ambitions;
  Heaping gold and probing thought;

In crude science, worn traditions,
Finds the spirit what it sought?
In the tumult of the nations,
Surging like a shoreward sea,
Are Thy sundered congregations
Gathering unto Thee?

With the footsteps of the ages,
Are we drawing nearer Thee?
Beautiful upon Time's pages
Will our name and record be?
Year on year of worthier living
Add we to life's glorious sum?
Through our failures, Thy forgiving,
Lord, Thy kingdom come!

Over fallen towers of error,
Laid by our own hands in dust;
Past the ghosts of doubt and terror,
Out of sloth's in-eating rust;
From Gomorrah's lurid smouldering,
Borders of the drear Dead Sea, —
Graves where selfish loves lie mouldering, —
Fly we unto Thee.

Vain a secret hoard to carry
From our ruined house of pride;

Weights that hinder, fiends that harry,
  Are the idols that we hide.
Draw us rather by the sweetness
  Of Thy breath in living things,
To Thyself, with unclogged fleetness,
    Lifted, as on wings!

Dogmas into truth transmuting;
  Fusing differences in love;
Creed and rite no more disputing,
  Closing rank and file we move;
Leaving our dead Past behind us,
  Turning not, nor looking back:
May no wayside glimmer blind us
    To the one straight track!

Brother hastening unto brother,
  Youth rewakening in our eyes,
Loving Thee and one another,
  Find we our lost Paradise.
Where the heart is, there the treasure;
  Led by paths we cannot see
Unto heights no guess can measure,
    Draw we nearer Thee!

Nearer Thee, through every æon,
  Every universe of Thine!

Man and seraph swell one pæan,
  Harmonizing chords divine.
Thine from Thee no power can sever;
  Through death's veil Thy face they see;
Saved, forever and forever
    Drawing nearer Thee!

HIS BIRTHDAY.

It is His birthday — His, the Holy Child!
And innocent childhood blossoms now anew,
Under the dropping of celestial dew
Into its heart, out of this heavenlier Flower,
That penetrates the lowliest roof-tree bower
With fragrance of an Eden undefiled:
O happy children, praise Him in your mirth, —
The Son of God born with you on the earth!

It is His birthday — His, in whom our youth
Becomes immortal. Nothing good, or sweet,
Or beautiful, or needful to complete
The being that He shares, shall suffer blight;
All that in us His Father can delight,
He saves, He makes eternal as His truth.
Praise Him for one another, loyal friends!
The friendship He awakens, never ends.

It is His birthday — and this world of ours
Is a new earth, since He hath dwelt therein;

Is even as heaven, since One Life without sin
Made it a home: His voice is in the air;
His face looks forth from beauty everywhere;
His breath is sweetness at the soul of flowers:
And in Him — joy beyond all joy of these —
Man wakes to glorious possibilities.

It is His birthday — and our birthday too!
Humanity was one long dream of Him,
Until He came: with fitful glow, and dim,
The altars heavenward smoked from vague desire,
Despair half stifling aspiration's fire.
He is man's lost ideal, shining through
This life of ours, whereinto floweth His;
God, interblent with human destinies.

It is His birthday, — His, the only One
Who ever made life's meaning wholly plain;
Dawn is He to our night! No longer vain
And purposeless our onward-struggling years;
The hope He bringeth over-floods our fears:
Now do we know the Father, through the Son!
O earth, O heart, be glad on this glad morn!
God is with man! Life, Life to us is born!

DOOR AND KEEPER.

THE corridors of Time
Are full of doors — the portals of closed years;
We enter them no more, though bitter tears
Beat hard against them, and we hear the chime
Of lost dreams, dirge-like, in behind them ring
At Memory's opening.

But one door stands ajar —
The New Year's; while a golden chain of days
Holds it half shut. The eager foot delays
That presses to its threshold's mighty bar;
And fears that shrink, and hopes that shout aloud,
Around it wait and crowd.

It shuts back the Unknown: —
And dare we truly welcome one more year,
Who down the past a mocking laughter hear
From idle aims like wandering breezes blown?
We whose large aspirations dimmed and shrank,
Till the year's scroll was blank?

We pause beside this door.
Thy year, O God, how shall we enter in?
How shall we thence Thy hidden treasures win?
Shall we return in beggary, as before,
When Thou art near at hand, with infinite wealth,
Wisdom, and heavenly health?

The footsteps of a Child
Sound close beside us. Listen! He will speak.
His birthday bells have hardly rung a week,
Yet has He trod the world's press undefiled:
"Come with me!" hear him through his smiling say.
"Behold, I am the Way!"

Against the door His face
Shines as the sun: His touch is a command:
The years unfold before His baby hand;
The beauty of His presence fills all space.
"Enter through me," he saith, "nor wander more;
"For lo! I am the Door."

And all doors openeth He,
The new-born Christ, the Lord of the New Year,
The threshold of our locked hearts standeth near;
And while He gives us back love's rusted key,
Our Future on us with His eyes has smiled
Even as a little child.

THY KINGDOM COME.

SOMETIMES a vision comes to me
Of what Thy world was meant to be, —
Thy beauty all things shining through, —
Thy love in all the works we do.

I shade my spirit's dazzled sight
Before the splendor of that light:
Earth crowned with heaven's pure diadem —
The Bride — the new Jerusalem!

For this alone didst Thou descend,
O Son of God, man's glorious Friend,
Out of Thy Father's blessedness, —
That human life might be as His.

Thy Kingdom come, our souls within!
Where Thou art, is no room for sin:
Oh show us what our lives may be,
Led home to Him, by following Thee!

IMMORTAL YEARS.

THEY come, they linger with us, and they go,
The lovely years!
Into our hearts we feel their beauty grow;
Through them the meaning of our life we know,
Its joys, its fears.

They whom God sent us, robed in sacred light,
Out of His sky,
With snow and roses, stars and sunbeams bright —
Too beautiful they must be in his sight
Ever to die.

Though down the long, dim avenues of the Past
Their swift feet fled,
In His eternity the rooms are vast;
There wait they, to be ours again at last: —
They are not dead.

Are they not in immortal friendship ours,
Always our own?

Never in vain bloomed one of their sweet flowers,
Whose rose-breath up through blessed Eden bowers
Climbed to His throne.

Immortal by their sadness, in our thought
That lingers yet;
Their gracious rainbow-smiles, with clouds inwrought;
Their gentleness, that from our errors caught
Shadowy regret.

Immortal, by their kind austerities
Of storm and frost,
That drove us from our palaces of lies —
Baseless, unsheltering splendors, that arise
At a soul's cost.

The immortal years — they are a part of us,
Our life, our breath:
Their sorrows in our eyes hang tremulous —
Ours in a union tender, glorious,
Stronger than death.

Poorer or richer, with us they remain
As our own soul;
None shall divorce us from our mutual pain,
Nothing shall take away our common gain,
While ages roll.

Out of the years bloom the eternities:
From earth-clogged root
Life climbs through leaf and bud, by slow degrees,
Till some far cycle heavenly blossom sees,
And perfect fruit.

And nothing dies that ever was alive;
All that endears
And sanctifies the human must survive;
Of God they are, and in His smile they thrive—
The immortal years.

FORETASTE.

How do I know that after this
    Another life there is?
Another life? There is but one,
    In mystery begun,
Continued in a miracle, God's breath,
The living soul, spells not the name of death.

How know I that I am alive?
    So only as I thrive
On truth, whose sweetness keeps the soul
    Vigorous and pure and whole:
Heaven's health within is immortality;
The life that is and evermore shall be.

To grasp the Hereafter is not mine;
    And yet a voice divine
Hath, page by page, interpreted
    Time's book, while I have read.
And, as my heart in wisdom shall unfold,
Secrets of unseen heavens shall I be told.

To Thy Beyond no fear I give;
Because Thou livest, I live, —
Unsleeping Friend! why should I wake,
Troublesome thought to take
For any strange to-morrow? In Thy hand,
Days and eternities like flowers expand.

Odors from blossoming worlds unknown
Across my path are blown;
Thy robes trail hither myrrh and spice
From farthest paradise;
I walk through Thy fair universe with Thee,
And sun me in Thine immortality.

YET ONWARD.

I THANK Thee, Lord, for precious things
  Which Thou into my life hast brought;
More gratefully my spirit sings
  Its thanks for all I yet have not.

How fair Thy world to me has been!
  How dear the friends who breathe its air!
But who can guess what waits within
  Thine opening realms, Thy worlds more fair?

That which I had has slipped away,
  Lost in the abysses of the Past;
By that I lack am I to-day
  Heir of Thine undawned æons vast.

The best things joy to me has brought,
  Have been its sigh of yearning pain;
Its dreams of bliss unguaged by thought;
  Its dear despairs, which yet remain.

If Thou Thyself at once could give,
  Then wert thou not the God Thou art;

To explore Thy secret is to live —
  Creation's inexhaustible Heart.

To some Thou givest at ease to lie,
  Content in anchored happiness :
Thy breath my full sail swelling, I
  Across thy broadening seas would press !

Dear voyagers, though each nearing oar
  Around, is music to my ear, —
Sweeter to hear, far on before
  Some swifter boatman call, " Good cheer ! "

At friendly shores, at peaceful isles,
  I touch, but may not long delay ;
Where Thy flushed East with mystery smiles,
  I steer into the unrisen day.

For veils of hope before Thee drawn,
  For mists that hint the immortal coast
Hid in Thy farthest, faintest dawn, —
  My God, for these I thank Thee most.

Joy, joy ! to see, from every shore
  Whereon my step makes pressure fond,
Thy sunrise reddening still before ; —
  More light, more love, more life beyond !

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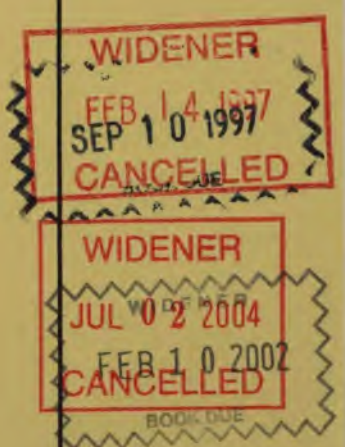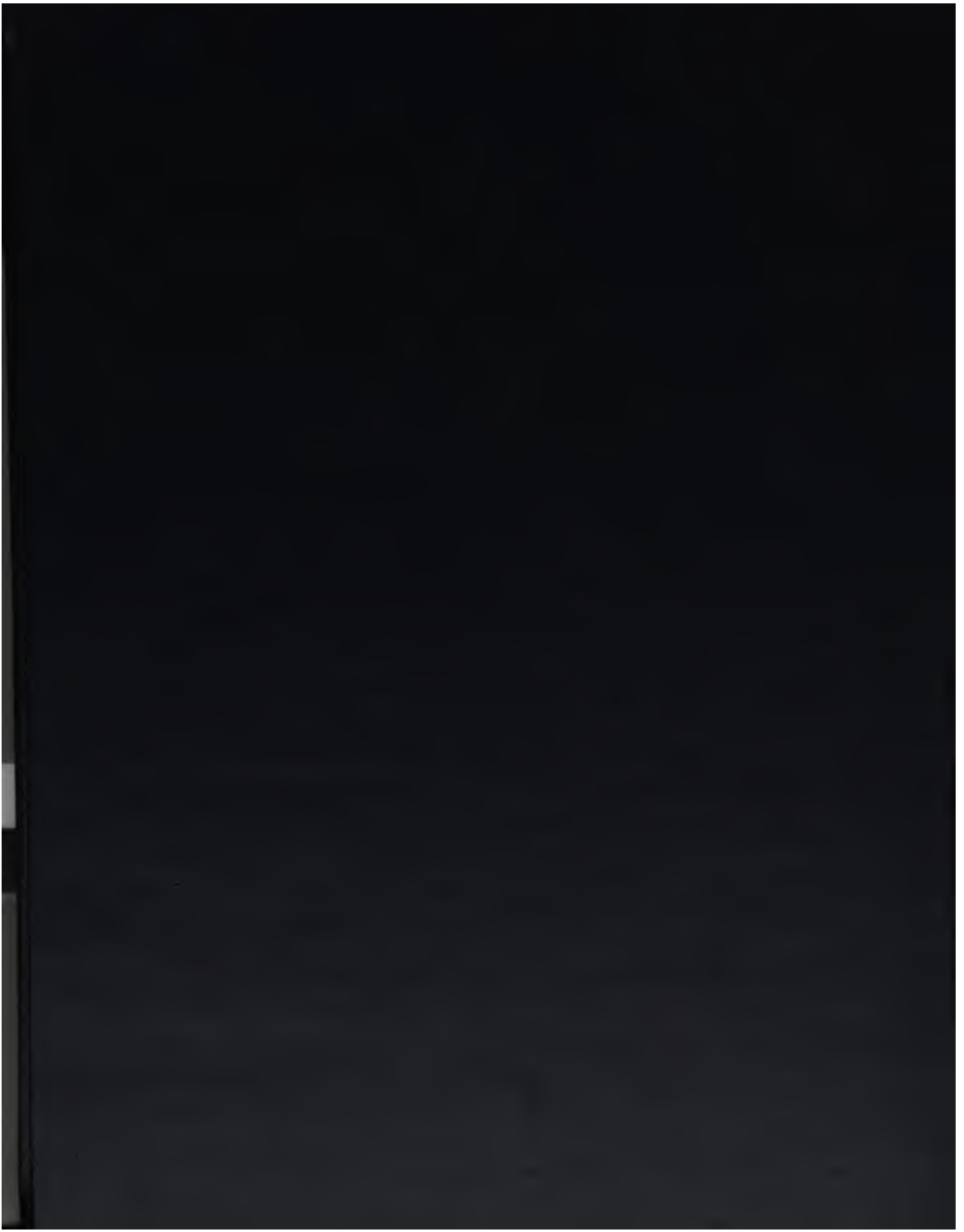
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